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PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

THE NIHILIST'S SON.

BY ALLAN ARNOLD



The door of Madrack's hut opened and a powerfully built young man clothed in the garb of the slaves of the mines, and armed with a stick, bounded into the room. "Michael, my son!" screamed Madrack.

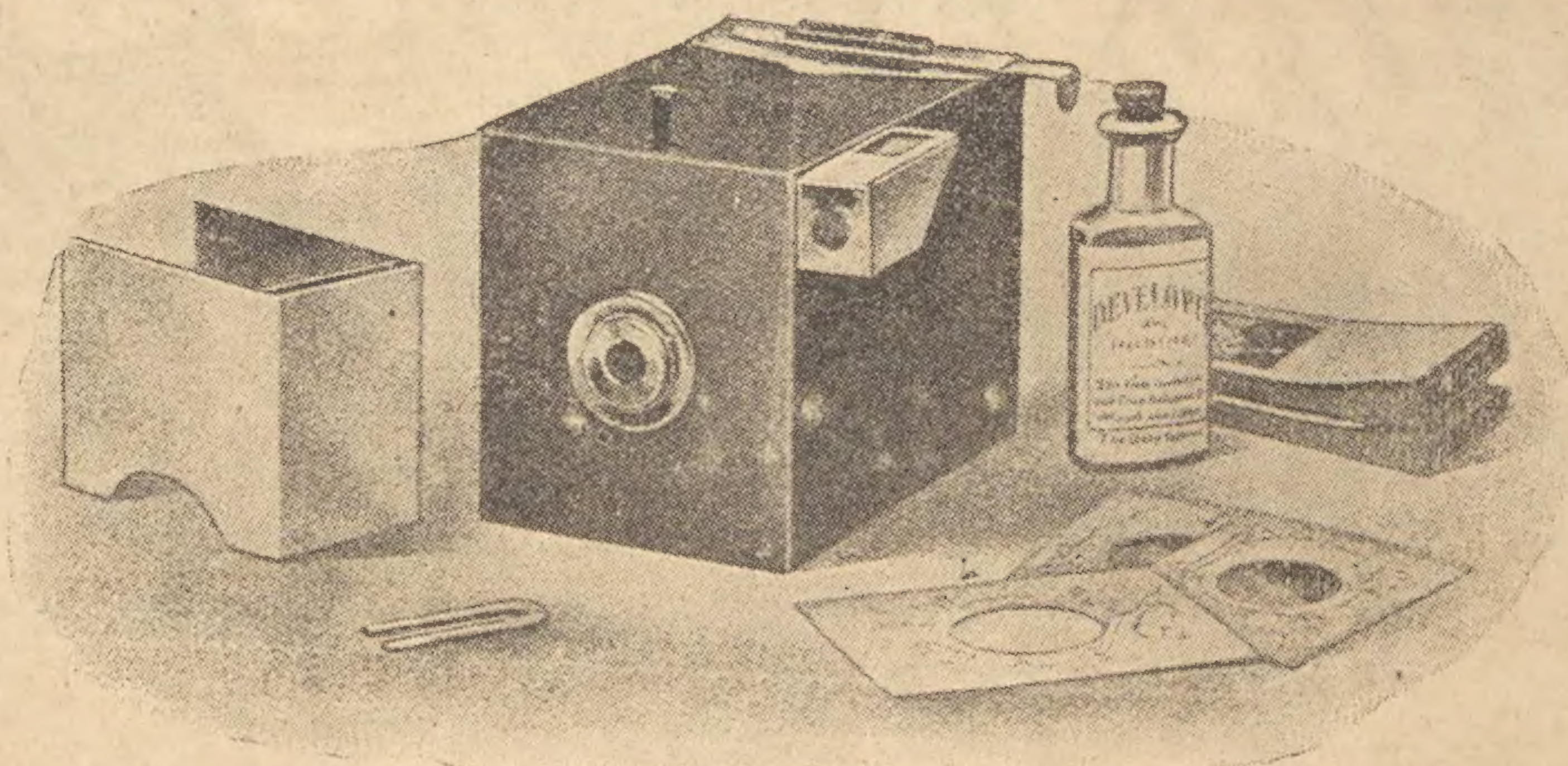
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THE NIHILIST'S SON

OR,

The Spy of the Third Section

By ALLAN ARNOLD

CHAPTER I.

THE MINES—THE EXILE'S FAMILY—THE REVOLT.

The snow is falling—there is ice everywhere and the Arctic winds of Siberia howl over the dreary Khirgez Steppes, strewn with the graves of hundreds of Nihilist exiles who were condemned to a living death in Russia's great northern prison-land.

Sighing through the larch and fir-trees the wintry blast sweeps over the mountains of the Baikal in Eastern Siberia and drives the glittering snow, which has become the winding-sheet of so many unfortunates down upon the town of Timsk and the settlement of exiles, at the foot of the great range where the mines to which exiles are doomed are situated.

Timsk is in the heart of Russia's far land of snow and death, many days' journey from Tobolsk, the most important city of Eastern Siberia, which is located at the junction of the Tobol and Irtysh rivers, and is the great halting-place of the convoys of Siberia, from which the exiles are sent to their various destinations.

When the unfortunate one doomed to the mines of Timsk leaves the banks of the Irtysh, he believes that he is leaving the world of sunlight and liberty—the love of which has doomed him—forever; for he knows that man has seldom escaped from the gloomy depths of the terrible mines of Timsk.

The world holds not a more dreary place than the same Timsk.

The settlement is walled in by lofty mountains, crowned by white caps of everlasting snow, and these massive barriers that nature has placed there seem to the exile like the walls of a prison, and serve to imbitter his life of misery.

Through the snow the wind was driving down from the mountains in blinding sheets this day whereof we are writing, which was toward the close of the Siberian winter in the last year of the reign of Alexander II., a man clad in the garb of a slave of the mines was making his way from the great iron doors that closed the entrance to the mines, out of which he had just been allowed to pass by the guards, toward the row of log-huts in the distance, where the wives and families of such of the exiles as

had followed their loved ones to Siberia were permitted to reside.

Long weeks of patient toil and servile obedience, which ground the proud spirit of the exile most bitterly, had won for him the reward of "good conduct"—a permit to spend an afternoon with his wife and son at their cabin.

This man was Ivan Verdroff, a noble spirit who had dared to advocate the cause of Russian liberty, and he had been a member of the great Nihilistic League of St. Petersburg, the branches of which organization had, at the time of which we are writing, spread everywhere throughout the vast domain of the Czar.

For no crime save the love of humanity and freedom had Ivan Verdroff, a year previous to the opening of our story, been sent to Siberia, sentenced to imprisonment for life in the mines of Timsk.

The devoted wife of this hero of Russia had accompanied him into exile, with their child—their beloved son, a boy of twelve, sturdy and handsome, who had inherited all his father's noble qualities—a love for freedom, bravery, and nobility of nature.

Manfully did Ivan Verdroff breast the blinding snow-storm, hastening to meet his loved ones.

There was in his eyes a light that had not gleamed there for months, and in his bounding heart there was a wild hope, the existence of which he scarcely dared acknowledge to himself.

"I shall see them now—my wife, my son, my noble Paul. What joy to clasp them in my arms again! It will repay me for all the weary days of uncomplaining toil I have spent in that living tomb yonder, thousands of feet beneath the mountains," he murmured.

In a few moments he arrived at his destination—the hut that sheltered those who were dearest of all on earth to him.

He paused a moment at the door.

The voice of his wife reached his ears, and a solemn feeling stole over him as he comprehended that she was at prayer—that she was praying for him.

The musical voice of the suppliant became silent, and then the husband and father entered the cabin.

At sight of him, his wife—a beautiful woman, still in the full bloom of matronly loveliness—sprung into his embrace, and threw her arms about his neck.

"The Nihilist's Son," Paul Verdroff, was present, and he, too, sprung to his father's side with a glad cry.

A moment, and wife and son were encircled by the arms of the husband and father.

His coming was a glad surprise—the most joyful event that had entered their darkened lives since they crossed the Ural Mountains and entered the dread land of Siberia.

"Oh, Ivan, my husband, heaven has heard my prayers, and brought you out of the mines to us once again!" said the wife.

"Yes, Evadna, I have obtained a good-conduct permit to visit you. But my leave of absence expires at night-fall," answered the husband.

"Oh, father, must you go back to that awful place? Is there no escape for you? I should like to kill all—those cruel jailers of yours!" cried Paul.

The Nihilist's son spoke fiercely, and he clenched his small hands in just anger.

"Particularly I should like to shoot that terrible monster Hargardar, the spy of the Third Section, or secret police of Russia, whose plot sent you here, my father," added the boy.

Ivan Verdroff smiled at his noble son's anger, but he admired him for the spirit he exhibited.

To his wife he said:

"I suspect you have told our son all?"

"Yes," replied the boy, before his mother could speak. "Mother has told me everything. I would not rest until she did. I know that Hargardar, the great spy of the Third Section, upon whom General Mellikoff, the head of the secret police, relies for the accomplishment of his most dreadful and dangerous work, is your deadly foe. I know that he once sought to make my mother his wife, and that when she chose to marry you the wretch took a terrible oath that he would revenge himself—that he would ruin you, my father, and yet make my own dear mother his slave."

"All that is true, my son. For years Hargardar, though he watched me like the lynx-eyed spy he is, could discover nothing concerning me that would give him an opportunity to execute his plot of vengeance. But when the Order of Russian Liberty came into existence, and I became a Nihilist, the opportunity he had so long sought was found. Hargardar secured evidence against me, and I was by him denounced to the Czar, and hurried away to Siberia—sentenced for life to the mines," said the boy's father bitterly.

"And Hargardar has been here since you have been in the mines. He came to tempt my mother to desert you—my father," said the boy.

"And I ordered him from my presence, and forbade him ever to dare enter it again. Oh, how I fear and loathe that terrible man!" said the Nihilist's wife.

"Hargardar, the spy of the terrible Third Section, and I have a long and fearful account to settle, and one day the settlement shall be made in full, if heaven wills!" said the Nihilist, earnestly.

"I think I should have shot him had I been present when he visited our cabin. I was not here when he came, but mother told me of his visit and his purpose," said Paul.

"When was the spy here?" asked the slave of the mines, as though a sudden thought had just traversed his mind.

"Two days since," answered his wife.

"And do you know whether he is still in Timsk or not?"

"No, I do not. He came here with a convoy of exiles under his command," the lady replied.

Some further remarks regarding the spy were made, and then the subject was changed, and in the joy of that glad reunion the Nihilist and his family strove to forget the man who was the evil genius of their lives, and to bring about their home something like a spirit of happiness.

The hours sped by unheeded, and the shadows of approaching night were falling, when—

Clang! clang! clang! the great bell at the mines rang loudly, noting the hour.

Ivan Verdroff sprung to his feet.

"My visit is at an end. I must return to the mines; but not for long. Oh, my loved ones, I can keep the secret from you no longer, and it is not necessary that I should. To-night will witness a great revolt of the slaves of the mines. Be ready for instant flight at any moment. My plan is this: If the uprising of the exiles be successful, I will seize the horse and sledge of the superintendent of the mines, and we will attempt to escape with it."

The exile spoke excitedly.

The hope that had sustained him since a few bold spirits in the mines had dared to whisper a plot of revolt seemed about to be realized.

Paul was delighted.

In his joy he clapped his hands and embraced both his father and mother again and again.

With a farewell of affectionate words, the exile tore himself away from his wife and child, and strode away through the snow-storm again toward the mines.

He had almost reached the great iron gates of the vast underground prison of the mines, when a muffled shout, like the roar of distant thunder, reached his ears, and a moment later the doors of heavy iron were dashed open, and a few of the guards of the mine rushed out, pursued by a horde of hollow-eyed, long-bearded men, who were armed with picks, drills, and other implements used in the mines.

The exile comprehended that some unforeseen incident must have occurred to precipitate the revolt of the exiles, for the hour they had set for the uprising had not yet come.

From the fact that but few of the guards escaped from the mines, he surmised that the others had been slain by the infuriated men who had trembled beneath their cruel knouts, or whips, for months.

He saw that the revolt was a success, and as the men who had escaped from the mines scattered in every direction, Ivan Verdroff turned and ran like the wind for his cabin.

He found his wife and son were ready for departure, and then he hastened for the stable of the superintendent of the mine.

Fortune favored him, and in a thrice he drove back to his cabin in a stout sledge, drawn by two swift Siberian horses that belonged to the superintendent, and he had also secured arms and ammunition from the storehouse of the government that adjoined the stable.

A moment later, the exile and his family were dashing away.

CHAPTER II.

THE ESCAPE.

Ivan Verdroff lashed his horses to furious speed, and with shouts in imitation of the Imschik, or driver, he urged those hardy, shaggy Siberian steeds on and on.

The sledge was well supplied with furs, and both the exile and his little family were warmly dressed.

Father and son wore dakhas—coats made of reindeer skin that are almost impervious to cold—and the mother was clad in the costume of the women of that Arctic climate.

She wore over all a heavy fur pelisse that covered her from head to foot, and which was provided with a hood that could be drawn up over her head if desired.

The temperature was more than 35 degrees below the freezing-point, and the horses' breath froze, and they were soon covered with ice.

In the sleigh, besides a carbine, there was a quantity of provisions, which Paul's mother had hastily prepared, and a flask of vodka—the strong white brandy of which Siberians are so fond.

Ivan Verdroff was armed also with a pair of revolvers and a huge Siberian knife, such as is used by the bear-hunters of that country, and which is a most formidable weapon.

The flight of the exiles was pursued in an easterly direction, but they had not proceeded more than a single verst when the booming of a cannon was heard in the distance.

"Ah! that is the discharge of the alarm-gun at Timsk. Some of the guards who escaped from the mines must have reached the town and reported the revolt. Now the Cossack garrison of Timsk will scour the country in every direction in pursuit of the fugitives," said Ivan Vardroff.

His wife shuddered.

"If Hargardar, the spy of the Third Section, should still be in Timsk, he will take particular pains to hunt us down. He will follow our trail to the exclusion of all others, and he is a human bloodhound, or whom it is said he always captures his prey," she said.

"I'll never be taken alive. The dark dungeon of the mine shall never become my tomb again—that I swear!" said Ivan, resolutely.

"I can fight, too," said the Nihilist's son. "See, I have brought my little carbine with me, and I know how to use it."

"Brave boy, grant you may have no occasion to do so!" murmured his mother.

The way of the escaping one lay across frozen plains, amid thickets of birch and larch, and through pine forests, where the Siberian bear prowls at night, and where the famished wolves gather in mighty hordes to pursue their prey.

Suddenly, from a thicket which the sledge was passing, four men mounted and armed as hunters dashed into view.

Paul's mother uttered a cry of terror at the sight of these men.

"Heaven protect us!" she cried. "Hargardar is here!"

The foremost of the mounted men was the terrible police spy—the exile's deadly foe.

He and his companions—officers from Timsk—had been out hunting, and they were now on their return to Timsk.

Their discovery of the fugitives was purely accidental.

Hargardar was a large, powerfully built man, with Muscovite type of features; but little of his face, save his flashing, little, bead-like black eyes, could be seen, for he wore a full black beard that fell upon his breast.

The moment he discovered the sledge of the exiles, he surmised the truth.

With a shout he and his companions threw themselves forward to intercept the flying team.

"Halt! Halt, I command you, in the name of the Czar!" roared the spy of the Third Section.

"Never! Liberty or death," shouted Ivan, defiantly, and he lashed his team again.

Madly now they tore onward.

"We must pass those men!" said the exile, through his tightly-closed teeth, as clutching the lines with one hand he drew a revolver in the other.

Straight down upon the men who barred the way of escape the sledge tore.

They were reached.

Hargardar and another made a dash at the bridles of the horses, but they could not clutch them.

The detonation of Ivan Verdroff's revolver rang out, and one of the foe fell, but Hargardar, at whom the shot was fired, escaped.

On—on now the wild flight was continued, and the spy of the Third Section was soon out of sight far behind.

"He will be on our trail with a force at his back before the night is an hour older!" muttered Ivan.

But all were thankful that they had passed the danger for the present at least.

Soon the darkness fell.

As the night advanced the moon and stars rendered objects distinctly visible.

From time to time the distant howls of a wolf was heard, and the occupants of the sledge cast apprehensive glances about them.

The sledge was passing through a gorge, when the gaunt form of a wolf was seen in the rear.

Before the gorge was passed other wolves were seen, and soon there was a fierce pack in pursuit of the sleigh.

The horses, inspired by terror as the howls of the famished horde rang in their ears, made new efforts to increase their speed, and Ivan Verdroff plied the lash unspairingly.

Nearer and nearer came the wolves.

The plain rang with their discordant howls.

"We shall have to fight them," said Ivan, presently.

"Do you think you can drive, Evadna?" he added.

"Yes," replied the devoted wife.

To her Ivan surrendered the lines.

Then he turned his face to the rear.

The vanguard of the wolfish legion was now close to the sledge, and their gaunt frames and fiery eyes were plainly seen.

The sledge in which the Nihilist and his family were escaping was one of those rude, roughly made vehicles constructed by the Siberians from the timbers found in their native forests.

It was provided with a back of three standards and a heavy rail.

Behind this, Ivan Verdroff and his son now crouched down, and leveled their carbines at the wolves.

"We will fire together!" said the boy's father.

They selected two of the foremost wolves of the pack, and they simultaneously discharged their weapons.

Both shots told, and the two leaders of the famished horde fell struggling in the snow, where they were quickly devoured by the others.

The pursuit of the wolves was not checked, though.

While Paul reloaded both his own and his father's carbine, the latter drew his revolvers.

The two weapons each contained six shots, and Ivan Verdroff meant that each one should prove fatal to one of the howling band that hung upon his trail.

He took deliberate aim, and began to fire.

At each shot he selected the leaders of the chase.

Every bullet brought down a wolf.

The rapid and fatal volley momentarily checked the pursuit of the wolves.

But the pause in their pursuit only lasted while those that survived devoured the victims of Ivan Verdroff's bullets.

Again the famine-urged brutes were on the trail of their human prey.

Now the carbines of both father and son were brought to bear upon them again.

Ivan Verdroff's revolvers were empty, though.

The wife and mother saw this, and twisting the lines about the rude dash-board, she turned her face toward her protectors, and picking up the pistols that Ivan had thrown down, she hurriedly loaded them.

The discharge of the carbines served not to hold the wolves in check an instant.

The savage brutes were leaping upon the rear of the sledge.

At this critical instant the brave wife of the Nihilist placed the reloaded revolvers in her husband's hands.

Her forethought had saved the party for the time.

Again Ivan poured a destructive volley of shot among the wolves, but now the speed of the horses was failing.

The wolves were all about the sleigh.

Ivan dropped his revolvers again when they were empty, and snatched up his carbine, which had for the second time been reloaded by his son.

The exile had discharged his own carbine, and Paul was leaning forward in the act of firing at a wolf that seemed about to leap at him, when the team gave a sudden side-bound to avoid a rock, and the boy lost his balance, and pitched headfirst out of the sleigh among the howling wolves.

An agonized scream burst from the mother's lips.

"Paul! our child; oh, save him! save him!" she cried.

Ivan Verdroff was for the moment frozen with horror, as he saw his son precipitated from the sleigh; but he whipped out his great Russian bear-killing knife, and dashed to the rescue.

The father slashed right and left among the mad wolfish host, and drove them back.

He snatched Paul up in his arms, and as he did so the wolves surged around him again, a perfect maelstrom of red, distended jaws, flashing eyes, and snapping teeth.

One huge wolf leaped upon Ivan's breast, and buried his teeth in the arm that encircled the boy, while others seized his limbs.

The father battled desperately for his life, but it seemed that the wolves must conquer—that the brave man and his son were both doomed.

They were close to the side of a steep mountain.

Suddenly to Paul's ears, as he clung frantically about his father's neck, there came the sound of a strange rumbling.

It seemed to proceed from the mountain-side, but neither the boy nor the man who was engaged in that terrible fight with the wolves heeded it.

Meantime, the devoted wife and mother had stopped the team, and slipped a few cartridges into one of the revolvers, which she discharged at the wolves.

She, too, heard the sound from the mountain-side, and the next instant she shouted a thrilling warning:

"The avalanche! The avalanche!" she screamed.

Father and son heard the words.

They glared at the mountain-side and saw, to their horror, a vast torrent of snow and ice sweeping down upon them.

The wolves seemed to feel the danger, for they darted, snarling and snapping, away from the man they had so fiercely attacked.

The next instant father and son were engulfed by the snow-slide.

The force of the mass as it struck them dashed Ivan Verdroff to the ground, and it caused Paul to shoot forward down the side of a ridge.

The boy struck the snow at the foot of the ridge, and then he experienced a sensation as though he were falling, and such was the fact.

The boy was precipitated into a snow-covered pit some ten or fifteen feet in depth.

He struck the bottom of the pit heavily, the breath was driven out of his body, and he lost consciousness.

How long he thus remained the boy knew not, but when he recovered he found that no bones were broken, and he regained his feet.

The opening to the pit through which he had fallen had been closed by a huge block of ice, as he could see, and although he knew it not, over this was heaped a mountain of ice and snow brought down from the mountain-side by the snow-slide.

Paul was imprisoned under the avalanche.

CHAPTER III.

PAUL'S PERIL.

Paul was horrified as he contemplated his situation, but he was a brave-hearted boy, and he at once made an effort to escape.

He succeeded in clambering up the rocky side-wall of the pit until he reached the ice-closed opening through which he had fallen into it, and attempted to remove the barrier that had been interposed by the avalanche which prevented his further progress.

All his efforts to remove the ice were futile, and he would not have wasted time in making them had he known that there was a mountain of snow heaped on the ice.

Paul soon concluded that it was impossible to escape from the pit by the route he had entered.

He was filled with anxiety about his parents, and his heart sunk as he thought that if his father had perished in the snow-slide, his mother was left alone to battle with the wolves.

The Nihilist's son began to explore the strange place into which he had fallen.

It was a pit, but there was an opening in one side of it that the boy soon discovered.

Through this opening he crawled.

Then, to his surprise, he found himself in a vaulted cavern.

The mountains of the Baikal range abound in caverns, and many of them are utilized by the wild huntsmen who roam these fastnesses as dwellings.

The cave seemed to be an extensive one, and passages branched off in several directions.

One of these the boy followed, but after he had wandered about for a long time vainly searching for some exit from the cave, he found himself at the very spot from which he had started.

Despondent and exhausted, the boy sunk down to rest, but in a short time he again resumed his search for an exit from the cave.

His quest proved unavailing, and in despair Paul threw himself upon the ground, utterly worn out and miserable.

Despite the gravity of his situation, he soon fell into a sound sleep.

Paul was awakened by the voices of wolves howling upon the surface of the earth above his head, and he could not sleep again.

The long night through the boy lay awake, and it was to him a night of horror.

He had no means of telling when day dawned but by the lapse of time.

At last the boy arose and recommenced his wanderings in the cave.

The darkness was, of course, complete, and he was obliged to grope his way along the walls.

He had this time not proceeded far, when he heard a strange, "grunting" sound.

The boy came to a halt and listened intently, while his heart beat fast, and he wondered if there was some monster of the mountain in the cave.

He soon became aware that the sound he had heard was drawing nearer.

More and more distinct it became, until the boy no longer doubted that it was made by some animal.

He crouched down close to the wall.

Then followed a suspenseful time, and it seemed to Paul that the unseen animal that was approaching was coming straight toward him.

Paul was unarmed.

His little carbine was buried in the snow under the avalanche.

If he were attacked by some fierce animal in that dark cavern, his fate was certain death.

It was no wonder that the boy experienced the greatest terror as he thought of this.

Soon through the darkness the boy saw a pair of eyes.

They glowed like two coals of flame, and they were soon so near that had the boy extended his hand he might have touched the animal to which they belonged.

The creature uttered a low growl.

Then the boy knew what sort of animal it was.

"A bear," he said, mentally.

Paul thought that the animal was about to attack him, but, strange as it may seem, after smelling about him for a moment or so, the bear passed on, leaving the boy unharmed.

Then, as he congratulated himself upon his escape, Paul had a happy thought.

"I'll follow the bear. No doubt the old fellow knows the way out of this cave, and he shall act as my guide," he resolved.

Stealthily he followed the animal.

The bear seemed not to heed him, but kept steadily on, as if it knew very well just where it was going.

Presently, to Paul's intense delight, when a considerable distance had been traversed, he saw a glimmer of light in advance, and he knew that an opening from the cavern to the outer world was before him.

The bear passed through it and Paul hastened after him.

He found himself in a defile among the Baikal Mountains.

Just then the bear seemed to notice the boy, and he suddenly wheeled about and advanced toward him, growling ominously.

Paul uttered a cry of alarm, and, as if in answer to his shout, an old man clad in the skins of wild animals, and armed with a rifle and a broad-bladed knife, stepped forth from a break in the snow-clad rocks.

The stranger was evidently a Burait hunter—one of those men of the wild mountain range who know the mysterious trails of this region as they are known to the prowling wolf that travels them day and night.

The Burait is brave, sure-footed as the ibex, and they are as keen of sight as the eagle.

"Golga! Golga! Down, sir! Would you devour the little father?" cried the old fellow, addressing the bear, which was a monster of his kind, and jet black.

In obedience to the command of the Burait, the great bear turned about and trotted to his side as obediently as a dog.

The old mountaineer patted his great head, as he said:

"Golga don't let any one come to our hut without asking leave first. I am Madrack, a hunter of the mountains, and my hut is just out of sight beyond the rocks yonder. Who are you?"

Paul was amazed, but he comprehended that the bear was a tame one, and the pet of the old Burait.

The boy scarcely knew what account to give of himself, for he feared if he told the truth he might put enemies on the trail of his parents, provided, as seemed scarcely possible, they had escaped the wolves and the avalanche.

For a moment Paul hesitated.

"You do not answer; why is this?" asked the mountaineer, and he regarded the boy somewhat suspiciously.

Paul now remembered that his father had told him that the Nihilists had established secret "chapters" or lodges everywhere, even in the heart of Siberia, and that he had taught him the hailing sign by which a brother might make himself known to a brother.

It occurred to the boy to test the old mountaineer, whom fate had thrown in his way, and he did so.

Quickly he made the sign of the Nihilists.

Instantly the old Burait answered the secret signal of the Nihilist's son.

"You are not of age to be a brother!" cried the old hunter.

"No. But my father is Ivan Verdroff, of St. Petersburg, and he taught me the one sign of the order I have given you before he was banished to the mines of Timsk. He said some time it might be of service to me," replied Paul.

"And so it shall, my boy—so it shall. Then they sent your father to the mines? Poor boy, poor boy! I pity you! I have a son in the mines of Timsk, doomed for twenty years, because he, too, was a Nihilist. But come, trust me fully—I will befriend you—and tell me how you came here," the old man said, earnestly.

"I will trust you," answered Paul.

Then he went on and told the story of his father's escape, as the reader knows it.

When he told of the revolt of the exiles of the mines of Timsk, the old mountaineer was delighted.

"Ha! ha!" he cried. "I'll wager a bottle of the best vodka that my son was foremost in the revolt; a brave boy is he. Ah, I hope now to see him here soon. He knows every mountain trail and path as well as I do, and once he reaches the hills the bloodhounds of the Czar will never catch him."

Paul felt that he had found one man who would prove his true friend.

"Do you think my father could have escaped the avalanche?" he asked, as the hunter led the way toward the hut he had mentioned.

"I know not. It is possible, but we will shortly visit the place where the snow-slide fell, and perhaps we can discover some trail that will tell us whether your father escaped or not," answered the hunter.

Rounding a ledge of rocks, a snow-clad hut came in sight, and into it the Nihilist's son was ushered by the Burait hunter.

It was a warm and comfortable dwelling built of logs, and a bright fire of pine-cones burned in a deep fire-place. The walls were hung with the skins of fur-bearing animals, and spears, cross-bows and traps were heaped in one corner.

The hunter placed food before the boy, but Paul could not eat, so great was his anxiety regarding the fate of his father and mother.

"You are safe here, my boy. Remain until I come back. I am going now to the top of the mountain to take a look out over the steppes that intervene between here and the mines of Timsk. I hope to discover my son coming," said the old hunter.

"Come, Golga," he called, and followed by the tame bear, he strode from the hut.

The change from intense cold to the comfortable warmth of the hut made him very sleepy, and yielding to the feeling, he threw himself upon a couch of skins, and soon fell into a dreamless slumber.

For many hours the boy slept, and when he awoke he was surprised to find that the fire had expired, and that the hut was in darkness, for night had come again.

Paul was alone, and he was sure that he would have awakened had the Burait returned since he took his departure with the intention of visiting the summit of the mountain.

The boy experienced vague feelings of apprehension, and he arose and rekindled the fire.

He went to the door and looked out.

The snow was falling gently, and the silence of the night was broken only by the distant howling of the wolves.

The long winter's night passed, and still, when the new day dawned, old Madrack had not returned.

Paul left the cabin and wandered about, thinking, perhaps,

he might find some trace of the old hunter, whose prolonged absence surprised and alarmed him.

Wild and picturesque was the scenery all about him, and the silence of those eternal mountains impressed the boy strangely.

Among the gorges, where from the jutting crags hung mighty icicles, that glittered like white diamonds in the sunlight, the boy wandered.

Paul must have wandered much further than he thought to go from the cabin, when he heard in the distance the blast of a Baikal horn, and almost at the same moment he came upon a well-beaten path in the snow which led into a rocky pass.

The boy was advancing along the pass, when the silence of the mountains was broken by a scream of terror, and a little girl, clad in a fur-trimmed pelisse, came in sight, running at full speed toward the boy, her long, golden curls streaming upon her shoulders, and her arms outstretched, as if imploring protection.

An instant later two men who were in pursuit of the childish fugitive, came in sight.

One of them was a fierce-looking Cossack, and the other Paul recognized with an exclamation of terror and surprise.

He was Hargardar, the dreadful spy of the Third Section!

The savage-looking Cossack overtook the little girl before she reached Paul.

The boy fled, but Hargardar had seen his face, and recognized him as the son of the man he hated, and he bounded in pursuit of him.

Paul ran like a hunted deer, but the police spy gained upon him rapidly despite all his efforts to evade him.

"Stop! Stop, I say, you young rascal!" Hargardar shouted.

Heedless of the command of the police spy, Paul kept on; but the race was a short one.

Hargardar clutched his shoulder, and he was hurled backward into the snow.

"Through you, spawn of Ivan Verdroff, I will strike my foe a blow that will cut him to the heart!" cried the spy.

As he spoke he raised the Cossack lance he carried, and he seemed about to drive it through the body of the helpless boy at his feet.

Paul uttered a cry of terror, and closed his eyes as he saw the lance descending straight toward his heart.

At the same moment from the mountain-side there came the roar of a bear.

Was the bright young life of the Nihilist's son to end there in that lonely mountain gorge?

Was he fated to meet death at the hands of his father's deadly foe?

CHAPTER IV.

THE SPY'S PLOT.

It was the purpose of Hargardar to kill Paul Verdroff, the Nihilist's son, and the boy thought that his last moment had come.

At this critical instant, old Madrack, the Baikal hunter, and his tame bear Golga, came in sight upon the mountain-side.

The mountaineer saw the peril of the boy.

He comprehended that it was impossible for him to reach his assailant in time to save him.

"A bullet can travel swifter than a man," muttered the old man.

As he spoke he raised his carbine.

As the weapon was leveled, it was brought to a full-cock, and Madrack looked at Hargardar through the sights of the weapon.

The huntsman of Siberia was a trained marksman, and he meant to send a bullet through the arm of Paul's foe that grasped the spear.

But he did not discharge the weapon.

While his finger lingered for a moment on the trigger, the dark-visaged Cossack, who had seized the fair-haired little girl, came rushing to Hargardar's side.

As Hargardar's spear was falling straight toward Paul's heart, the Cossack grasped the arm of the police spy.

The blow was stayed, and for the moment, at least, Paul was respited.

The spy of the Third Section turned upon the Cossack fiercely.

"What mean you, Kirjof?" he demanded, in a voice that rung with passion.

"To serve you, chief—to serve you!" the Cossack hastened to say.

"To serve me!" cried Hargardar, incredulously.

"Yes. You are rash to slay the boy now, when I can show you a way to gain ten thousand roubles by making him a captive."

"Ten thousand roubles! Ah! that is the amount of the reward the government has offered for the capture of Ivan Verdroff, the boy's father."

"True. Since it has been discovered that he laid out the plan for the successful revolt of the prisoners of the mines of Timsk, and also in consideration of the fact that he was a ring-leader of the Nihilists of old St. Petersburg, the Czar has determined to recapture him at any cost."

"I know that, Kirjof. But what is your meaning regarding the boy? How will his capture bring the money? The reward is for the father—for the Nihilist himself. There is no charge against the boy."

"Certainly not; but do you not see? Hold the boy, and find a way to get the information to his father that his life will be taken if the former does not surrender himself up to you within a given time. Ivan Verdroff loves his child. I know the man. Mark what I say—he will sacrifice himself to save his son."

"But you forget, we do not know whether Ivan Verdroff is living or not. The chances are that he is dead."

"I say no. Did we not find the sledge in which he escaped, and the bones of the horses, which had been devoured by the wolves. Would we not have found human bones if the Nihilist and his wife had been devoured by the wolves?"

"It seems so."

"Assuredly, and I've news for you. Hugo, the scout you sent out to search for traces of the escaping Nihilist, came into camp just as the child of Vava made a rush to escape, and he told me he had found the tracks of those we seek in the mountains. Ivan Verdroff and his wife live."

"This is great news, Kirjof. We shall capture them. They cannot escape, but do you say Ivan Verdroff loves his son? I'll try the plan you advise, but how shall I convey to the Nihilist, whose hiding-place we know not, the news of his son's capture, and the conditions upon which I will spare his life?"

"That shall be accomplished. I will explain my plan as we return to camp."

"Very well; it shall be as you advise. Bring the girl along, and I will take charge of the boy."

Madrack had drawn back out of sight, and taken the bear with him.

"I thought I heard the roar of a bear, and I am sure that I heard the sound of a huntsman's horn," said Hargardar, as he led Paul along the pathway near which he had been captured.

"Let us then make haste back to the camp in the valley. These mountains swarm with half-civilized mountaineers. I should not care to encounter them," said Kirjof.

"They dare not molest us. We represent the authority of the Czar. They respect that, I know."

"You are wrong. The Buraits do not always do so."

"Do you mean that, Kirjof?"

"Yes; these wild men of the mountains were never conquered by the Czar when he gained dominion here. A single blast from one of the shrill-toned horns they carry may suffice to bring a horde of bronzed mountain men down upon us. They are fierce customers, these Burait Cossacks, and always well armed. They carry heavy lances, cross-bows, and some of their own trusty swords of Damascus steel. They really know no law except the will of their chief, and they always conduct a battle according to peculiar tactics of their own. I saw them in an engagement once, and I tell you they are brave, and well-nigh invincible. They fight silently, and they have no standard except the horse-tail, which is suspended from the lance of the chief."

As Kirjof stated these facts regarding the men of the Baikals, the police spy and his captive came in sight of a camp of Cossacks in the center of an ice and snow-walled valley.

This was the camp of Hargardar's men.

The spy of the Third Section had lost no time in following the trail of Ivan Verdroff, and he was armed with due authority to arrest the exile wherever found, if within the confines of the Czar's dominions.

As the Cossack Kirjof, who was a sort of lieutenant to Hargardar, had said, they had discovered the sledge of Ivan Verdroff at a distance of some versts beyond the spot where the avalanche fell from the mountain.

They had also found the bones of the horse picked clean by the starving wolves.

Moreover, it was true that the scout sent out by Hargardar, of whom Kirjof spoke, had found the tracks of the escaping Nihilist and his wife in the mountains.

Paul's heart sunk as he heard the plot of the police spy, for, knowing the noble nature of his father as he did, he was sure that he would, as Kirjof thought, surrender himself to save his son.

But Paul rejoiced at hearing the news that his father and mother yet lived, and it seemed to him that their escape from the avalanche and the famine-crazed wolves of the steppes was little short of a miracle.

Paul was conducted into a large kибитка—a movable, bee-hive-shaped tent of basket-work, covered with thick sheets of felt.

These tents are the universal Tartar dwellings, and the Cossacks found them serviceable among the mountains.

Thrusting the Nihilist's son into the tent, Hargardar said: "Stay within, boy, if you do not want to feel the weight of the knout"—a whip with many lashes.

With this he left the boy.

Paul glanced about him curiously.

He had never seen the interior of a Tartar tent before.

The floor of the kибитка was covered with bearskins, there was a portable fire-place in the center, and above it, in the dome-shaped roof, was a circular opening to allow the smoke to escape.

Paul fell to wondering who the little girl, who was evidently as well as himself, a captive in the hands of Hargardar, could be.

The boy pitied the winsome little maiden, and his curiosity regarding her was fully awakened.

Meanwhile, Madrack and his tame bear, as soon as Hargardar and his companion disappeared with their captive, crept down the mountain-side.

The hunter and his fierce pet gained the path which the feet of Hargardar's men had beaten in the snow as they traversed it in going to and coming from the valley in search of fuel.

"Ha! a path! Then there is a large party in camp near, and they have been located for some time," said the old man to himself.

He had resolved to follow Paul's captor.

"I'll save the boy if I can," the brave old mountain dweller said.

"I owe it as a brother of the great Nihilistic League of Russia to save the son of Ivan Verdroff, for who is there more devoted to the cause of freedom than he?" the hunter added.

Carbine in hand, and followed by Golga, the bear, which trotted along at his heels like a dog, the mountaineer cautiously advanced along the path until the camp of the Cossacks came in sight.

Then he halted.

"These man-hunters of the Czar have made this valley their headquarters while they search the mountains for Paul's father," muttered Madrack.

The old mountaineer had seen Hargardar at Irkutsk, one of the most important cities of middle Siberia. He had gone there to attend the great fair annually held there. The spy of the Third Section had been pointed out to the mountaineer, and as he was one who never forgot a face, he recognized him as soon as he saw him in the mountains.

"I don't think the Cossack bloodhounds will move for some time, and as Ivan Verdroff will become anxious about me if I do not soon return to him, I will do so at once. The lady must be conducted to my hut, and then we will see what can be done to rescue the boy. Most can be accomplished after night-fall, when the darkness will favor us."

Thus reflected old Madrack.

He turned about, spoke to his bear, and then, still followed by the docile animal, he retraced his steps up the mountain-side, and vanished over the summit of a lofty range.

Down the opposite side of the mountain he proceeded to a sheltered dell, where two anxious hearts awaited him.

CHAPTER V.

THE MOUNTAINEER'S DISCOVERY.

When old Madrack left Paul in his hut he had gone forth to take an observation from the mountain-top, in the hope that he might see his son Michael, who was one of the slaves of the mines at Timsk who escaped during the revolt of the exiles entombed there.

The mountaineer had reached the mountain-top, and he was about to descend, having failed to see anything of his son, although he had scanned the bleak, snow-clad steppes beyond the mountain in every direction, when far away to the west, in a defile of the Baikals, he caught sight of two moving figures.

Old Madrack possessed a keenness of vision rivaled only by the eagle, although he was well advanced in years.

For several moments his eyes were fixed upon the forms he had discovered in the distance.

He made out that they were the forms of a man and a woman.

The garb they wore told him that they were not Baikal-dwellers—not Burait Cossacks.

Like a flash the thought darted through the mind of the old hunter that the persons he had discovered might be Paul Verdroff's father and mother.

No sooner had the possibility of this being the fact occurred to Madrack than he determined to overtake the persons he had discovered and learn who they were.

Without delay he set out in pursuit of the as yet unknown strangers.

They traveled fast.

"It seems as if they were running away from some one," thought Madrack.

That the strangers were fugitives he could not doubt, and the suspicion he had formed regarding their identity was strengthened in his mind.

On and on, in pursuit of the persons whom he believed to be the escaping Nihilist and his wife, old Madrack followed.

The couple whom he was trailing finally became aware that they were followed, and they increased their speed.

A long chase followed.

This was the cause of the old hunter's long absence from the hut.

Finally Madrack came near enough to the objects of his pursuit to give them one of the secret signals of the Nihilists.

Instantly it was returned.

The fugitives halted.

Old Madrack soon reached them, and as soon as he saw the faces of the strangers he said:

"How do you do, Mr. and Mrs. Verdroff?"

"What, you know us?" exclaimed Ivan Verdroff, for he it was, in a startled voice.

"Yes, I recognized you, sir, from your marked resemblance to your son Paul."

"Our son Paul! Oh, can you tell us of him?" cried Paul's mother.

"Yes, since I found him in the mountains."

"He lives! Paul lives! Oh, this news has brought joy to an almost heartbroken mother. We mourned our boy as dead," the lady said.

"Where is our son? Tell us all, good friend! I called you friend, but the sign you gave us assures me I should have said brother," Ivan Verdroff said.

"Right, brother—I am of the faith."

"What faith?"

"The faith of freedom."

The two men grasped hands and exchanged the secret grip of the Nihilists.

Then Madrack told that he had left Paul safe and well in his hut.

"There, too, you may find shelter and safety, my brother of the faith. The lady is exhausted. We will rest for a time, and then I will lead you to my hut and to your son," he said, in conclusion.

"A thousand thanks. Gratefully we will accept your hospitality," replied Ivan Verdroff.

Madrack's provision bag, without which no hunter of the mountains ventures far from home, was well filled.

He opened it; and of its contents the exile and his wife ate heartily.

Then they told the story of their escape from the avalanche.

"The snow-slide hurled me down the ridge above which I was when it came down upon me. I was carried on over the frozen crust of the plain until I sunk into a clump of trailing-cedar. You know that plant never stands erect, but covers the ground just under the snow with a network of limbs. The snow-slide lost its velocity, and its furthest limit did not reach me. My wife still remained in the sledge, but she saw me carried on before the snow. The wolves had fled; and turning the horses, she drove toward me, and reached me in a few moments. I was not seriously hurt, and I began to search among the debris of the avalanche for our son; but after a long quest I was forced to the harrowing conclusion that he was buried under the snow.

"After that we resumed the journey we had undertaken toward liberty.

"We camped in a mountain defile one night, and while we slept the horses took fright and broke away.

"Pursuit was useless, and we continued our flight on foot, and as we were without food we must soon have perished."

Thus Ivan Verdroff explained.

After the recital of the story of his wonderful escape, Ivan Verdroff said:

"But I have not asked your name, brother."

"It is Simon. Madrack."

"Then you are Michael Madrack's father?"

"Yes."

"I know him well. We toiled side by side in the mines of Timsk, and a braver, more noble boy than your son was never the victim of a tyrant's cruelty."

Again Madrack grasped the exile's hand, as he said:

"I hope to see Michael soon, for Paul has told me he was one of those who escaped."

"Yes, I saw him leave the mine and dash into the mountain."

The old man expressed his delight, and soon after, guided by Madrack, the two set out for the home of the former.

They had reached a sheltered glade at the side of the mountain, just beyond which was the camp of Hargardar, when Madrack came to an abrupt halt, and said:

"I see smoke rising yonder. We are returning by a different route from the one I followed in leaving my cabin, and I fear the sight of that smoke is a warning that there are strangers in the mountains. I know of no hunting party of the mountaineers in this neighborhood, and none of our Baikal people dwell in the direction whence that smoke comes."

"We fear that foes are on our trail. Our deadly enemy is Hargardar, the infamous spy of the Third Section, of whom you may have heard. The smoke you have discovered may come from the camp-fire of our pursuers," answered Verdroff.

At the mention of Hargardar's name the lady shuddered, and drew closer to her husband.

"The same thought had occurred to me," said Madrack, "and if you will await my return here I'll scout forward and find out whether there are friends beyond the mountain, or enemies."

The exiles assented, and he left them.

When he returned, after witnessing the capture of Paul, which he was unable to prevent, he reported what he had discovered.

As he re-entered the sheltered dell at the foot of the mountains on his return, Paul's father and mother came forward to meet him.

"What have you discovered?" the exile asked, anxiously.

"The camp of a band of Cossacks, and Hargardar, the spy of the Third Section, is with them," answered Madrack.

"That sleuth-hound of the Czar will never abandon our trail while he lives," said Ivan Verdroff.

"To think that he is so near fills me with terror," the lady said.

Madrack then broke the news of Paul's capture.

The grief and alarm of the boy's loving parents may well be imagined.

"My boy in the power of that monster! Oh, Ivan, he must be saved! must be rescued!" cried the mother.

"He shall be if I can accomplish it," the father answered.

Madrack was not near enough to overhear the conversation that passed between Hargardar and Kirjof, the Cossack, with regard to their plan to make Paul serve as a hostage whose ransom was to be his father's return to the horrible slavery from which he had escaped.

"This Hargardar was one of the hounds of the tyrant who ran down and captured my brave boy Michael, and if he gets out of the Baikal mountains alive it will be no fault of mine. He is a wolf—as a wolf he should be slain," said Madrack.

"We must now make a circuit and reach my hut by another

route. When darkness comes we will undertake Paul's rescue," he added.

He led the way forward again.

The hut was reached in safety, and a blazing fire was made.

Paul's mother rested on a couch of furs, and warm food was provided by Madrack.

Suddenly Golga the bear uttered a fierce growl and trotted to the door, and there came the sound of a man's footfalls.

Madrack snatched up his carbine, drew the weapon to his shoulder, and covered the door.

CHAPTER VI.

IVAN VERDROFF IN DISGUISE.

An instant and the door of Madrack's hut opened, and a powerfully built young man, clothed in the garb of the slaves of the mines, and armed with a knotted stick cut from a larch-tree, bounded into the room.

"Michael, Michael! my son!" almost screamed old Madrack.

"Father!" cried the young man, and while tears of joy started in his sire's eyes, parent and child, who now met after years of cruel separation, embraced warmly.

The young man was indeed the noble Michael Madrack of whom Ivan Verdroff had spoken.

He now saw the latter.

In his amazement he exclaimed:

"Ivan Verdroff here!"

"Yes, saved from starvation by your good father, who found my wife and me wandering in the mountains," answered Ivan.

Then the two exiles shook hands, and Ivan Verdroff presented his wife to the man who had shared his imprisonment in the mines.

Ivan asked about other prisoners, and he inquired regarding the manner of Michael's escape to the Baikals after he left the mines.

"There was a general alarm soon given by the guns of the citadel at Timsk, and the gendarmes were scouring the country everywhere in pursuit of the escaping ones, and I've no doubt many were captured. I am an old woodsman. My hetman here trained me in woodcraft and mountain lore. To the knowledge thus acquired I owe my escape."

Thus replied Michael.

"I said once he was in the forest they would never run him down," Madrack said, proudly.

"But stay; I have with me a strange document which I found fastened to a tree not far from here. I forgot it in the joy of this meeting," said Michael.

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a strip of reindeer hide. It was about a foot square.

The inner side had been bleached until it was a grayish white.

Michael held up the reindeer skin, and Ivan Verdroff saw that some words were rudely traced upon it with lamp-black.

The Nihilist read the writing on the reindeer skin which Michael Madrack had found.

It ran as follows:

"Take notice, Ivan Verdroff, I, Hargardar, of the secret service of His Imperial Majesty, Alexander II., do hereby notify you that I have arrested your son Paul. As in such instances a precedent has been established, your son has been tried by a military court-martial in my camp, and adjudged guilty of aiding and assisting in the escape of a Nihilist—meaning yourself. The verdict of the military court is death. Your son will be

shot at sunrise of the fifteenth of the present month unless you deliver yourself up to me to be returned to the mines whence you escaped before the date above-mentioned. If you do so surrender yourself, then it has been decided that we agree to pardon your son and permit him to have his freedom. It rests with you, Ivan Verdroff, to save the life of your son. We know that you are somewhere in the mountains, and notices—duplicates of this one—will be posted here and there for many versts around, in the hope that one of them may meet your eye.

"(Signed) HARGARDAR,
"Of the Third Section."

As he mastered Hargardar's message, Ivan Verdroff's face paled, and an expression of anger and anxiety appeared upon his features.

"The fiend!" the Nihilist cried. "He is cruel and remorseless. He knows no pity, and he will not hesitate to put my innocent boy to death as he threatens."

"Oh, Paul! Paul! my son is doomed to death," the mother cried, as she too read the message of fearful import which Michael Madrack had brought.

"I must save Paul. In this matter nothing must be left to chance. His life must not hang upon the success of an attempt at rescue which may fail. I have less of life before me than my boy. He is young, and I will give myself up to save him," said the father.

With a stifled scream the wife and mother clung to him convulsively, with pallid lip and wild, staring eyes. He felt her wildly fluttering heart beating against his own tumultuous breast.

"No, no, you must not go. You shall not surrender yourself up to Hargardar. You shall not be dragged back to the awful slavery of the mines," Paul's mother cried.

"Evadna, this is a terrible moment. I believe that you are now called upon to choose between husband and son," said the father.

"No. This is folly. Listen to the counsel of old Madrack, whose age has given him wisdom. In this offer of Hargardar I see a wolfish plot—a cunning scheme to trap both father and son. Not for an instant do I think he would release your boy were you to deliver yourself up to him," said Madrack.

"I agree with my father, Verdroff. It is consistent with the character of Hargardar to presume that he only seeks to draw the toils about both you and your son," said Michael.

"And more than that, there are five days between this and the date Hargardar has set for the execution of Paul," added the old hunter.

"Yes, and in that time we can make many attempts to rescue the boy. Time enough to talk of surrendering yourself when we have failed in our efforts to save the boy," said Michael.

"I believe you are right, my friend," assented Ivan Verdroff.

"They are! they are!" cried the lady.

"My fears for my son for the moment served to carry away my judgment," said Paul's father.

Then, while Madrack placed food and drink before his nearly famished son, the little party discussed the project they had in mind.

"How can we rescue the boy? What stratagem shall we resort to to save him?" said Ivan Verdroff.

"Some one must enter the camp of the Cossacks in disguise, play the part of a spy, and try to steal the boy away," said Madrack.

"I will be that person," volunteered the brave Michael.

"No, I will not consent to that. Paul is my son. I will incur the greatest risks to save him," said the father.

"I might be most successful in rescuing the boy. I will enter the Cossack camp," said old Madrack.

"I cannot have you risk life and liberty while I sit idly by. No, no! As Paul's father, it is my duty to be foremost in his rescue. I insist, and I cannot be moved from my purpose. I will enter the Cossack camp," said the Nihilist.

Madrack and his son saw that he was resolved to do this.

"Since you are determined, we will offer no more objections. The question now is what your disguise shall be," said Madrack.

"I have it!" cried Michael. "He shall be a Baikal soothsayer or fortune-teller. You know those ignorant Cossacks have faith in the words of the seers who profess to reveal the future."

"Yes, your idea is a good one, Michael. He could not have a better disguise than that you mention, and I have the material to make it," answered the young man's father.

"In the matter of disguise, I will be guided by you, and I want your advice in everything. I have faith in your judgment," said Ivan.

While this conversation was in progress the persons engaged in it were so intent upon what they had in mind that they did not heed the movements of the bear.

Golga stood at the door growling ominously.

Suddenly, as Ivan Verdroff spoke the last words, Michael noted the bear's conduct.

"Golga acts as though he scented some one. Can it be that there is any one prowling about?" he said, and arising, he opened the door and looked out. Michael saw no one, and returning, he closed the door, and the conversation was resumed.

Although Michael had failed to discover any one, a spy crouched at the door, and he had overheard all Ivan and his friend's plans for the rescue of Paul.

When Michael came to the door he glided away into shelter among some stunted, snow-clad larches.

When the door closed, he listened once more.

The spy was a Cossack of Hargardar's band named Saga.

He was a cunning and cruel wretch, and he was devoted to Hargardar.

There was an expression of exultation on his dark, ugly face as he heard the conversation of the Nihilists.

"We'll trap them! Hargardar shall take them all back to the mines; but first we'll make sure of the capture of Ivan Verdroff, as I now Hargardar cares more for him than any of the others."

Thus the Cossack muttered.

The remaining hours of daylight were spent by the Nihilists in making Ivan's disguise.

Attired in the garb of a seer or fortune-teller of the mountains, Ivan said good-by to his friend, and having embraced his wife again and again, he tore himself away and set out for the Cossack camp, where Paul was held a prisoner.

Half an hour after his departure Michael was scouting near the hut, when he came upon a Cossack who was making his way along a defile.

Michael crouched down behind an ice-covered boulder, and waited for the Cossack.

As he drew near he heard the man mutter:

"Saga, whom I just met, told me to go on to a hut I would find near here, and watch it until he returned with a force to capture a nest of Nihilists it contains. He is hastening on now to reach Hargardar's camp ahead of Ivan Verdroff. He has heard his plans, and knows his disguise, for he listened at the door of the Nihilist's hut."

"Heavens!" thought Michael, "what a discovery I have made. I must capture this wretch, and then hasten on and warn Ivan Verdroff to turn back or he will walk into a terrible trap. All depends upon my overtaking Ivan in time. If I fail, he is lost."

The Baikal dweller crouched down for a moment, and then he made a leap at the Cossack scout.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NIHILIST'S PERIL.

The most dangerous exiles, or those who rebel against the tyrannical authority of the taskmasters of the prison-mines of Siberia, are obliged to work in irons.

Circles of iron much the same as the ordinary handcuffs, provided with chains, are placed about their ankles, so that they can only move slowly and by taking short steps.

When these irons have been worn for several months, they form a callous band upon the flesh of the unfortunate who is thus fettered.

These marks are almost indelible, frequently remaining for years after the manacles that caused them are removed, and they have often served as a brand by which to identify exiles who had escaped from the mines of Siberia, who, but for those tell-tale marks upon their ankles, might never have been recaptured.

Strange stories are told of the means resorted to by desperate men to remove the marks upon their ankles, upon the getting rid of which their freedom depended.

It is said that the archives of the Third Section, or secret police of Russia, contain an account of the case of an escaped exile, who had but one of his ankles marked with the brand of the irons worn in the mines, who in despair actually had his limb amputated to rid himself of the mark which, if discovered, would doom him again to the mines of Russia's terrible prison-land.

When Ivan Verdroff was first consigned to the mines of Timsk, rage and the sense of injustice that he suffered at the hands of an iron-handed despot made him desperate, and he was obdurate.

The merciless task-masters of the mines reported him, and the result was the inevitable knout. He was scourged with the knout and his ankles were ironed.

The Czar's victim wore the cruel fetters of the mines for several weary months, until at last he saw the folly of rendering his hard lot more unbearable than it would otherwise have been, and resolved to become docile and obedient, in order to win the confidence of his guards, that he might get rid of his irons and obtain a permit to visit his wife and son.

We have seen that Ivan Verdroff succeeded in getting placed upon the list of "good conduct" men, as the trusted slaves of the mines are called, and that he made a visit to his loved ones.

The irons that had long encircled his ankles before that time had previously been removed by the order of the governor of the mines, who little dreamed that at this very time Ivan Verdroff's indomitable spirit was uncrushed, and that even then he was plotting a revolt.

Although Ivan was rid of his irons, they had left behind them the accusing brand which marked him as a slave of the mines.

The disguise which Ivan Verdroff had assumed in which to visit the camp of Hargardar, the spy of the Third Section, and his Cossack followers, the hirelings of the Czar, consisted of a kaftan of deer-skin, a sheep-skin bonnet, and knee-boots, made by some cobbler of the Baikals, which resembled moccasins, with legs of fur.

Ivan wore a gray wig that fell in tangled masses upon his shoulders, and his face was covered with a beard of the same.

In his hand he carried a gnarled staff with a strangely-carved handle, and strapped upon his back was a leather bottle containing "charm water," and with all he was a perfect representation of the Baikal "Seer," or fortune-teller—those wandering impostors who may sometimes be found even at the fair of Irkutsk, which draws people from all parts of the Czar's empire, and from China, India, and Persia.

That Ivan Verdroff's disguise was a perfect one, there could be no doubt, and, thanks to instructions which he had received from old Madrack, the exile was confident that he could pass the ordeal which the assumption of his disguise entailed, undetected.

When he left the cabin of the Baikal mountaineer who had so opportunely befriended him, Ivan Verdroff proceeded rapidly on his way toward the valley in which Hargardar's camp was located.

He was guided in his course by certain landmarks, in regard to which the old hunter had thoroughly posted him, and that he should be able to find the valley he had not the slightest doubt.

Gladly would old Madrack and his son Michael have accompanied Ivan to the neighborhood of the camp where the Nihilist's son was held a captive, but they secretly feared to leave the lady, Ivan's wife and Paul's mother, unprotected; and they reasoned that in the event of the arrival of foes at their cabin, two men would be a force small enough to defend the wife of the Nihilist.

As we have noted, when Michael heard that soliloquy of the Cossack that informed him that Ivan's foes knew of his disguise and his purpose, he realized that the exile must not be permitted to walk into a trap which would surely be set for him.

As Michael leaped from his place of concealment at the Cossack scout, who was on his way to Madrack's cabin, there to watch until the other scout—who had pressed on in advance of Ivan Verdroff—sent a force to capture the inmates of the old hunter's cabin, the Cossack turned.

He discovered Michael, but his discovery came too late to save him, for just as he was raising his spear, Michael caught the handle of the weapon, wrenched it from the other's grasp, and with a terrific blow, stretched him senseless at his feet.

To bind him was the work of a moment, for Michael was provided with some stout deer-skin thongs that served his purpose well. He also gagged the Cossack, and, dragging him into a snow-drift, he left him, and hurried after Ivan, whose liberty, and perhaps even life, depended upon his being warned that his plans were known before he entered the camp of his mortal foe.

Brave, devoted Michael pressed forward at full speed through the snow, and Ivan Verdroff's tracks served as a plain trail for him to follow.

"I must overtake him before he reaches Hargardar's camp, or all is lost. But can I do it?" muttered Michael.

Ivan had a long start, and if he had traveled rapidly, as Michael reasoned that he naturally would, he must be a considerable distance on his way.

As Michael ran on and on, and still in the distance he could not catch a glimpse of the friend of whom he was in pursuit, the young mountaineer was forced to acknowledge to himself that it was a desperate chance if he overtook Ivan.

During the period of their long intimacy as prisoners—fellow-slaves of the mines—a firm friendship had been established between Ivan Verdroff and Michael.

They had become devoted to each other, even as though there was between them the tie of kindred—of brotherhood.

Michael would risk much, sacrifice much, to save Ivan, even as the latter would do the same for him.

But meantime, while Michael had accomplished the capture of the Cossack scout, and was pursuing Ivan at the height of his speed, the latter was meeting with strange and thrilling adventures.

Ivan, filled with the fervent hope that it might be given him to save his son, was entering a mountain pass at a point less than one-half the distance from the cabin of old Madrack and the camp of Hargardar, the spy, when his ears were saluted by a wild Cossack yell.

Instinctively the Nihilist exile halted and leaped backward, as from out an icy cavern that sloped backward from the pass into the towering Baikal range, a band of Cossacks rushed forth.

They were led by Saga, the spy who had listened at the door of old Madrack's mountain home, and who knew the disguised exile at a glance, by reason of having overheard his plans and having seen him quit the cabin.

The Cossack scout, after he pressed on in advance of Ivan Verdroff, met the party of his brethren whom he was now leading.

They had been sent from the camp in the valley by Hargardar, to search among the mountains for the very man whom they now encountered, for the spy of the Third Section had sworn that he would not leave the Baikals until he had captured Ivan Verdroff and his wife.

The disguised Nihilist experienced a thrill of alarm as the Cossacks appeared, which their belligerent attitude intensified, and yet his faith in his disguise caused him to believe that there was no reason to think that he was identified.

Quickly he was surrounded by the Cossacks, and a circle of lance-points, each one of which was ready to transfix him, prevented either a retreat or an advance.

Ivan was about to speak and begin the playing of the part of the Baikal Seer, to which his disguise was suited, when the Cossack scout, Saga, spoke:

"Ivan Verdroff, I arrest you in the name of the Czar," the Cossack said.

"I know not of whom you speak, my son—I am Feodor the Seer," he said.

"I know you and all your plans, for I listened at the door of the hut in the mountains, where, with a nest of Nihilists, you planned to enter the camp of our chief, Hargardar, and rescue your son," said Saga.

"Seize him and remove his disguise, my men, and you will see that my words are true. Ah! the 'little father' will be pleased at this capture!" the Cossack added.

Although Ivan Verdroff carried no weapon in sight, there was a brace of pistols concealed in his belt beneath his deer-skin kaftan.

In despair he dropped his staff and drew his weapons, but before he could use them a blow from a lance was dealt him from behind, and he fell half stunned in the snow.

Before he was permitted to regain his feet, he was disarmed and bound, and his disguise was removed.

Several of the Cossacks who had been employed at the mines of Timsk as guards identified Ivan Verdroff at once, and to his heart came the terrible realization that he had failed in his plan to save Paul.

The madness of desperation came upon him then, as he thought of the fate his recapture meant for him, and with a terrible effort he burst asunder the bonds that secured his wrists, wrenched a lance from the nearest Cossack, and made a leap for liberty.

A Cossack threw himself before him, but the desperate exile drove the lance through his body, and the watch-dog of the Czar fell dead.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STORM IN THE BAIKALS.

The next moment, and before the Nihilist had broken through the circle of foes who now closed up about him, he was hurled upon his back in the snow, and a bearded Cossack, whose dark Muskovite face wore an expression of deadly hate, aimed his lance at his throat.

The death of Ivan Verdroff would have followed instantly, but at this critical juncture the hand of Saga interposed to save his life.

He seized the lance that was aimed at the Nihilist's throat.

"Gazin," said he, "you must not kill him. Have you forgotten that it is the will of the 'little father' that he be taken alive? Then, too, as you well know, our chief Hargardar has ordered that we bring Ivan Verdroff to his camp alive."

"Little father" is an affectionate manner of speaking of the Czar.

The Cossack, who had been but an instant before intent upon slaughtering the Nihilist he had hurled to the earth, lowered his lance.

The mention of the Czar frightened him.

The Cossacks, who are a species of mounted militia who inhabit the steppes, are noted for their devotion to and obedience of the Czar.

These men form his most trustworthy troops, and in consideration of their services they are granted certain immunities from taxation, and need only serve in the military when specially called on.

Gazin was no exception to the general rule that a Cossack will always blindly obey the Czar, but now he fancied that he had a debt of vengeance to play.

"Ruka beda—the hand of misfortune—upon him, he has done me a wrong. The wretch has slain Zachka, my brother. The 'little father' shall order the bashlyk (hood) of death upon him, and according to the maxims of my tribe, it is given me to slay him. I have the right," said Gazin, fiercely.

"No, the will of the Czar and the order of Chief Hargardar overrules all the customs of our race. We must take this man to camp. Be assured a doom as fearful as death awaits him. He will never cross the Urals again. His grave will be made under the snow of Siberia," said Saga.

Gazin turned away, but his face was still dark, his brows contracted, and an angry light blazed in his little jet-black eyes.

The Cossack was not satisfied. He still wanted his revenge, and his thirst for it could only be quenched by the blood of the Nihilist.

"His life is mine, because he slew my brother," he muttered.

Once more Ivan Verdroff was bound, and a Cossack spurned him with his lance and ordered him to arise and march.

At that moment so great was the horror of the Nihilist for the fate that was in store for him that he almost wished that Saga had not interposed to save him.

"Better that I were dead," he thought, bitterly.

But when Ivan Verdroff thought of his wife and his son, he put the despair that had called the last desperate cry to his lips out of his mind.

He resolved not to yield to useless agitation or to give way to regrets that were sterile.

The chivalrous impulse of his nature came to the surface again, and in his heart he resolved to live to again escape, for the sake of his wife and son.

The Cossacks began the march for the camp in the valley.

The cold had increased during the last few hours, and now the wind that swept over the vast country of Siberia, extending from the Ural Mountains to Behring's Straits, was Arctic in its chill.

The light, dry snow upon the mountain-side was sent down through the defiles and gorges in blinding sheets, and the light of the moon and the stars in the infinite arch above was dimmed.

Through the whirling, eddying sea of snow the Cossacks of Hargardar's band marched the recaptured Nihilist.

It was a considerable journey back to the camp, and these

wolves of the Czar, who were by birth nomads of the steppes, and who were not at all at home in the mountains, lost their way in the terrible Baikal blizzard.

In these storms, as authenticated statements prove, it is impossible to see a foot ahead; and the oldest and most hardy hunter of the mountains will hasten to the nearest shelter when the warring elements thus rage.

"We cannot endure this, my brothers," said Saga, as he drained his vodka-flask at a draught. "Even an *imschik*" (driver), "who is supposed to carry the Czar's mail through all storms, would halt for this one, and besides, we can no longer distinguish land-marks, and we may wander away from the camp instead of toward it."

"Yes," assented another, "we must seek a shelter. There are overhanging ledges and caverns in many places that might shield us from the fury of the gale. It cuts like the blade of a *ragatina*" (spear).

Still the party struggled on yet a little further, but they cast solicitous glances about them, hoping to find some crevice or cavern that might shelter them.

"Bravo! here we have it. A cavern, as I live!" shouted Saga, presently, as the advance of the Cossacks discovered the opening of an excavation under a great rock.

Ivan Verdroff was hurried into the cavern by his captors, who huddled him about in order to shelter themselves from the fury of the storm, and to gather warmth from each other's bodies.

The gale increased in fury, the snow surged and whirled like an ocean maelstrom, and the intense cold did not moderate.

From afar came the long-drawn howls of the wolves which roam the mountain pathways day and night in quest of prey.

The fury of the blast hurled snow-laden birch trees to the earth as in pure vandalism, urged on by the malicious promptings of the demon of the storm.

"It is clear we cannot continue on to the camp to-night," said Saga.

"We may as well make ourselves as comfortable as possible here. Oh, this is a bitter night and I would give a handful of copecks" (copper coins valued at little more than a farthing) "for another flask of vodka, or even a glass of kvass," (a kind of small beer) he added.

"For my part I would be quite content with a drink or two of koomiss. I've not your appetite for drink. I fear you take too much," answered a gray-haired, bronzed-faced old Cossack.

Saga replied that vodka was better than fermented mare's milk any day, and without further conversation on the subject all hands set about scooping up the snow in a wall at the mouth of the cave.

Many hands there were to labor, and soon a wall of snow that almost closed the mouth of the cave, leaving only an opening for the entrance of the air, was constructed.

"Hazi, you may act as the *dovornick*—that is to say, porter—to our lodge," said Saga, facetiously.

The Cossack addressed understood that he was to stand guard, and so he shouldered his carbine, and took his stand near the snow-wall.

Saga, be it understood, was a sort of sub-chief, or captain, of the Cossacks, and his right to command was unquestioned.

The night advanced, and finally the Cossack camp became silent.

At the rear end of the cavern lay Ivan Verdroff.

The outline of the guard's form could be but dimly seen from where the captive lay, and yet Ivan noted that he leaned heavily upon his carbine, and seemed to be dozing.

"Oh, if I could but loosen my bonds, I might escape in this blinding storm. Once beyond the wall of snow which my captors have constructed across the entrance of the cave, I could

almost defy pursuit," thought the Nihilist, who lay wide awake long after the Cossacks were all asleep.

Then silently, but desperately, he struggled with his bonds.

Vainly did he strive to sever them.

The fetters that secured him could not be broken, and at length, in despair, he abandoned the attempt.

"It is useless—I am doomed," thought Ivan, and after a time, exhausted both in mind and body, despite the terrible situation he was placed in, the exile fell into a sound sleep.

Meanwhile, all the Cossacks seemed to sleep, and the guard at the wall leaned back against the rocks and snored as lustily as the rest.

Had Ivan only succeeded in liberating himself, this would have been the supreme moment for his escape.

The shrieking blast without disturbed not the slumber of the exhausted men in the cave, and the howls of the storm-chased wolves were unheeded.

At the loudest shriek of the brazen-throated tempest, the guard at the wall only straightened up for an instant, and thenapsed into the oblivion of dreamland again.

It seemed terrible that the captive was powerless to avail himself of these circumstances that seemed so favorable for his escape.

But later in the night, while the guard slept more soundly than ever, and while the stentorian snores of the Cossacks told that it would require a thunder-clap to awaken them, a dark form arose from among the sleepers.

This one wakeful member of the Cossack band was Gazin, the revengeful Cossack, whose brother Ivan Verdroff had slain in his mad, desperate attempt at escape.

Gazin had not abandoned his determination to slay the Nihilist; he still meant to secretly take his revenge.

As silently as the prowling wolf glides over the soft snow, the Cossack stole to the side of the sleeping captive.

Reaching Ivan Verdroff's side, the Cossack cast an apprehensive glance about him, and then he drew a long-bladed hunting-knife, and with his disengaged hand clutched the sleeping exile by the throat.

Ivan Verdroff was awakened at once, but the pressure upon his throat was so severe that he could not utter a sound, and, bound as he was, he could make no resistance, though he read murder in Gazin's blazing eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

A TIMELY ARRIVAL.

It was a terrible moment for Ivan Verdroff.

Death stared him in the face, and yet he could not offer the slightest resistance to ward off his doom.

Ivan Verdroff was at that fearful time in an agony such as few men experience in this life.

He thought of his loved ones, and from his heart a prayer, which, though silent, was so earnest that it must have reached the ears of the Infinite One who noteth even the fall of a sparrow, went up.

Was it not Providence, or fate, that shaped the events that followed?

As the latter is merely a name for the former, it seemed that the prayer of the Nihilist, who shuddered as his eyes, wide-staring and affrighted, caught the glitter of the Cossack's knife, must have been answered, for, without a sound, a dark form glided through the wall of snow at the mouth of the cave.

The stealthy intruder passed the solitary guard, who still slept, leaning against the rocks, and half supported by the carbine in his hand.

The intruder crossed the camp and hastened to the rescue of Ivan, whose peril he now discovered.

"I slay you because you killed my brother. Know, dog, that it is Gazin who kills you."

Thus the Cossack who had fastened his fearful grip upon the throat of Ivan Verdroff hissed in his ear, in an awful voice that thrilled the seemingly doomed one with new horror.

But as the words issued from the lips of the Cossack, he received a blow upon the head, and he fell as does the stricken ox beneath the blow of the butcher's mallet.

The knife with which Gazin had meant to slay the Nihilist was now made to serve another purpose.

Ivan Verdroff, to his joy and amazement, beheld Michael Madrack bending over him, with the knife of the fallen Cossack in his hand.

It was the daring young mountaineer, who had silently forced an entrance through the snow-wall into the camp, and struck down the revengeful Cossack at the very moment when an instant's delay must have cost Ivan Verdroff his life.

"Michael!" exclaimed Verdroff.

"Yes, it is I," replied the devoted young Baikal-dweller, and with a few hasty slashes he released Ivan Verdroff from the fetters with which Hargardar's minions had bound him.

Then they started to leave the camp of the foe, and with silent steps they crossed the cavern on their way to the snow-wall and the entrance to the camp.

They had almost reached it, when the fall of a bit of ice, which some unexplained, but no doubt natural, cause detached, awoke the sleeping guard.

He saw Ivan and his companion, and leveling his carbine he discharged it at the escaping Nihilist.

At the same time the guard uttered a shout of alarm.

In the hurry of the moment, fortunately for the exile, the guard had not taken an accurate aim at him, and the bullet whistled harmlessly over his head.

With a bound, Michael plunged through the snow-wall at the mouth of the cave, and Ivan followed him.

Rescuer and rescued vanished from the cavern as the Cossacks, alarmed by the report of the guard's carbine and his affrighted yell, leaped to their feet.

They darted in pursuit of the escaping ones.

But the storm still raged in unabated fury, and in it the Nihilists had vanished.

In the blinding snow, and through the darkness, pursuit was almost useless.

The Cossacks knew not in which direction to search, and after a very brief chase, which was fruitless, they returned to the cave.

Their rage and regret at the escape of the valuable prize who had slipped through their hands in so surprising a manner knew no bounds, and Saga ordered the guard who had slept on his post under arrest.

The chief of the Cossacks raved and swore, and vowed that the unlucky guard should feel the weight of the knout when Hargardar's camp was reached.

But the gray-haired old Cossack of whom mention has been made said:

"We may yet take the Nihilist back to the camp a captive. You told us you had discovered him in a mountain-hut among some Nihilists. He will seek to return there. When the storm is over we may go there and surround the hut before the inmates know of our presence. Then they may be secured. What think you? Is not my plan worthy of a trial?"

"It is—it is, and it shall be as you have proposed. We will seek to capture this Nihilist, as you say," assented Saga.

Meanwhile, Ivan Verdroff and Michael dashed through the blinding storm of snow, and pressed on and on, with undaunted mien, through the darkness.

Michael, with a rare skill, that seemed to Ivan almost like instinct, shaped his course in the direction of his father's cabin.

"We must hasten there and warn father of the discovery of his habitation, and he must seek safety in some mountain cave with your good lady," said Michael, when he had told Ivan of his discovery of the spy.

He related, as they went along, how he had sighted the Cossacks, and discovered Ivan a prisoner among them just as the "norther" commenced, and he told how he had breasted the blizzard and hung upon the trail, until the captors of his friend went into camp in the cave.

"The coming of the storm was a fortunate occurrence, for but for it the Cossacks would not have halted until the camp of Hargardar was reached," he said, in conclusion.

When the two Nihilists neared the place where Michael had left the Cossack scout whom he had overpowered, bound and secreted in a snow-drift, Michael turned aside to see if his prisoner were still there.

The snow had covered him, but the Cossack was still where Michael had left him.

The latter unbound his feet and ordered him to arise, but the Cossack did not stir, and a moment later the young Nihilist made the startling discovery that his prisoner had frozen to death.

"Thus one more of the Czar's sleuth-hounds has perished. He will never track another poor exile across the bleak steppes," said the Baikal dweller, fiercely.

The sight of the Cossack, who was, as Ivan noted, about his own size and height, suggested an idea to his mind, and he removed the dead man's clothing, made it into a bundle, and when presently he and Michael resumed their way, he took it with him.

But while all these events were transpiring out of the valley where Hargardar was encamped, Paul Verdroff was also meeting with adventures which must now be recorded.

At a late hour of the night of the boy's capture, the Nihilist's son was awakened by the sound of a voice at his ear.

He lay near the wall of the kибитка, or lodge, and through a small opening in it the whisper reached him from the outside.

The boy was wide awake in an instant.

The voice he heard was a childish one, and it was clear and distinct, as he could tell, though he heard but a whisper.

"Who are you?" whispered the Nihilist's son.

"I am Vava Vishkoff, whom you saw the bad men chasing when they caught you," answered the fair-haired little girl, for she it really was.

"And why do you come to me now?" asked Paul.

"I came to tell you that the two guards at the door of your tent stole a bottle of vodka from the tent where I sleep, and that it has made them drunk. You can pass them, if you will, though they are two of the most trusted men of the camp," answered the little girl.

"I will join you. Be silent now," replied Paul, and with a wildly-beating heart, as he thought that perhaps chance had provided a way for his escape, he stole from the lodge.

Undiscovered, he passed the drunken guards.

In the rear of the kибитка the little girl awaited him.

"Are you going to escape?" she asked.

"If I can," he answered.

"Will you let me go with you? I want to leave these cruel men, who are keeping me from my father and mother," she asked.

Paul took her hand in his.

"If I escape I shall owe it all to you, my brave Vava, for did you not tell me of the chance? Come, we will escape together," he said.

Then they stole across the valley and reached the mouth of the pass.

In another moment the youthful fugitives would have been out of the valley, but fate willed that they should be discovered, and Hargardar at this moment appeared at the door of the tent, and saw them.

He uttered a yell that alarmed the camp, and cried:

"I'll find a way to stop them. I'll send a winged pursuer after them that is more terrible than the fiercest wolf."

The Tartars of Siberia have a faculty of training the huge black eagle they call a bearcoat as a falcon, and they use him to hunt game, as hawks are in some countries employed.

Hargardar owned two of these terrible creatures of the air, and they were perfectly trained.

The bearcoat is large enough to kill a wolf, or even a man, if he comes in his way.

In the madness of the moment Hargardar rushed into his tent and liberated the two terrible black eagles, as he pointed at the young fugitives and bade the great birds "Go!"

With fierce screams the monster birds rushed through the air, and came sweeping down at Paul and Vava.

CHAPTER X.

A BATTLE WITH THE BLACK EAGLES.

Paul saw the great black eagles swooping at him like goshawks near the ground, with their necks outstretched and their terrible talons reaching out to clutch him.

The Nihilist's son knew that these monster birds were as powerful as fierce, and he drew Vava back against the rocks at the side of the pass that led out of the valley, and seizing the dead branch of a larch-tree, he placed himself upon the defensive.

Vava uttered a shriek of terror as she saw the great eagles swooping down upon herself and her companion.

Close to the rocks behind the boy she crouched.

"Those fearful birds mean to attack us. We shall be torn to pieces by their sharp claws and terrible beaks. Oh, save me—save me!"

Thus Vava cried, as with wide-staring eyes she watched the flight of the eagles.

"I'll fight them as long as I can," said Paul, bravely, but he shuddered as the shrill discordant shrieks of those tigers of the sky reached his ears.

Nearer and nearer came the eagles.

Vava, crouching against the wall, now made a discovery.

The ice and snow behind her yielded at the pressure of her weight, and she sunk back into a narrow rift in the rocks.

Vava had found a miniature cavern.

"Paul—Paul!" she cried, knowing the boy's name because he had told it to her as they ran from the kибитка.

"What is it, Vava?" asked the boy, without removing his eyes from the eagles.

"There is a cave here. Quick—quick! Seek its shelter before the eagles come!"

"A cave!" cried Paul, joyfully.

He turned and crept within the rocky shelter that Vava had discovered.

The entrance to the opening in the rocks was very small, so it had easily been covered and concealed by the heavy snow.

Within, the cave was large enough to accommodate Paul and his little companion, though they were somewhat cramped for space to move about in.

The Nihilist's son clung to his stout stick, and he meant to

defend the narrow entrance of the cavern against the feathered enemies Hargardar had sent against him.

Paul at once recognized the fact that the discovery of the rift in the rocks was most fortunate.

Now there was a chance to defend himself, and the child who was the companion of his flight.

The fierce Tartar-trained black eagles could not reach the youthful fugitives until they had passed the mouth of the cave Vava had so opportunely discovered.

"This will give us a chance. We can make a fight now, and the big birds can only attack us at one point. I shall be ready to beat them back the moment they show their heads at the mouth of the cave," said Paul.

"Can you keep them out?" asked the little girl anxiously, and she clung to her small champion as though she relied upon him for protection.

"I hope so. If I could bring my stick down upon one of their scraggy necks with full force, I'd break it. I am sure, and the first one of the ugly creatures that thrusts its beak inside our retreat will feel its weight."

"Here they are! The eagles have come!" Vava cried.

They heard the flutter of wings as the broad pinions of the great bearcoots beat the air, and the next moment the terrible Asiatic eagles alighted at the mouth of the cavern that sheltered Paul and Vava.

With a shriek, one of the huge birds thrust itself forward to enter the cave.

Paul stood braced close beside the mouth of the cave, and as the eagle appeared he dealt it a resounding blow with his stick.

The eagle uttered a shrill scream, but the boy's blow had fallen upon its shoulders and not upon its neck, and it drew back out of the cave again.

The retreat of the eagle was only momentary, for almost immediately it again darted at the mouth of the cavern.

Again Paul was enabled to deal the savage bird a heavy blow, but again, with a quick retrograde movement, it saved its long neck and retreated beyond Paul's reach before he could repeat his blow.

The boy now noted that a jutting rock of considerable size overhung the mouth of the cave, just within its mouth.

"If that rock could be made to fall, it would partially close the opening to the cave, and the space left open would be too small for the eagle to pass through. It seems to me that the rock could be detached. I dare not for a moment leave the mouth of the cave unguarded. Vava, climb up on the side of the wall and see if you cannot push the rock down. If it is balanced as it seems to be, even your strength should cause it to become dislodged and fall," said Paul.

"I will try and push the rock down, though I'm not very strong," answered Vava, a little doubtfully.

Then, encouraged by the boy, she began to climb toward the stone that seemed to be toppling and ready to fall.

For a moment Paul watched the fair-haired little maiden, and he saw that she was progressing famously.

The eagles had not abandoned the attack upon the boy yet, though, and presently one of them appeared at the mouth of the cave.

Paul made a desperate blow at the bird.

At the same time Vava cried:

"Back! Back, for your life, Paul! the rock is about to fall!"

Paul retreated from the cave's mouth, and the eagle was gathering itself for a forward swoop which would have carried it within the cave in another instant, but at this crisis the great rock, dislodged from its perch, came crashing down.

With a scream the eagle darted back, barely escaping with its life, and the rock struck the floor of the cave just within the

entrance to it, thus closing it save for a narrow space through which the huge eagles could not force themselves.

"Hurrah! The eagles cannot reach us, Vava. We have shut them out now!" cried Paul.

Then he assisted Vava to descend from the rocky wall.

"Oh, how glad I am! I pushed and pushed at the big rock, and it seemed at first that it would not fall, and when it did fall it almost carried me with it. But see, Paul, the eagles are thrusting their long necks through the little opening of the cave's mouth the rock has left," said Vava.

It was so, but as there was nothing to fear from them now, Paul heeded them not.

"My father has told me that he has seen the great bearcoots carry off a full-grown wolf in its talons, and I have read that they have slain more than one traveler," said Paul.

"But now our recapture by Hargardar is certain. We shall be taken back to the camp again, and hereafter we shall be more closely watched than before. But tell me of yourself, Vava—I am curious to know how you came in the power of Hargardar, and why he is holding you a captive," asked Paul.

"My name is Vava Vishkoff, as I told you, and my parents are wealthy people of Moscow. Of my father you may have heard, for he is Count Vishkoff, the provincial governor of Eastern Siberia," said Vava, and as she paused Paul reflected:

"The vast country of Siberia, reaching from the Ural Mountains, which separate it from Russia proper as by a belt—which is the meaning of the word Ural—to the Arctic Sea, is divided into two provinces by the Yenisei river. These provinces are called Eastern and Western Siberia. Vava's father must be a personage of great importance to represent the supreme authority of the Czar in Eastern Siberia."

"I was visiting at the palace of an uncle who is a Tartar sultan of the Khirgez steppes, and one night I went to sleep in my own apartment, but when I awoke I was mounted upon a swift horse, and carried in the arms of wild-looking nomads," continued Vava.

"Ah! you were abducted while you slept," commented Paul.

"Yes, and I think that something must have been given me without my knowledge to make me sleep, for when I awoke there was a strange taste in my mouth, and my head was heavy."

"That was caused by a drug," said Paul, in a tone of conviction.

"Such was my belief. I was carried by my captor for a long distance, and left at the hut of one of those wild Tartars of the steppes, who dwell in strange, half-underground huts, dug in the earth. There I was kept a prisoner until yesterday, when the dark-visaged man they call Hargardar, but of whom I had never heard before, came and took me away to the camp we just ran away from. I was trying to get away when you saw me first," Vava went on.

"And do you not know that Hargardar is the notorious spy of the Third Section, whose very name is a terror to the poor exiles of Siberia?" asked Paul.

"I know that now."

"Can it be that your father has incurred the anger of the Czar, and that Hargardar has been commissioned to take you a captive? I have heard that when Alexander fears a man in a trusted office may be tempted to treason, he sometimes makes prisoners of their children, and holds them as hostages for the good conduct of their parents," said Paul.

"No, no! I am sure the Czar has nothing to do with my abduction, for my father is a prime favorite with Alexander II. And I think there is no truth in the stories you have heard about the Czar abducting the children of his subjects and holding them to insure the good behavior of their parents. I had heard the same, but my father told me that it was all false—

merely a story told by those terrible people, the Nihilists, who want to kill the Czar," answered Vava.

"You do not like the Nihilists, then?"

"Oh, no! I think they are dreadful people, and I fear them."

"Perhaps you will change your opinion some day," said Paul, smiling at the earnestness of the little girl.

"But can you think of any reason why you were carried off?" he asked.

"No; and Hargardar would tell me nothing. I cannot even find out what he means to do with me," the child answered.

"All this is very strange. It seems to me most surprising that Hargardar dares to meddle with the child of one as powerful as your father, unless he is acting under secret orders from the Czar," said Paul.

As he spoke, the voice of Hargardar was heard at the mouth of the cave.

CHAPTER XI.

PAUL IN A STRANGE GARB.

As soon as Hargardar had liberated his trained eagles, and sent them on their flight through the air in pursuit of Paul and Vava, he and his followers also started in pursuit of the escaping ones.

The police spy, in his rage when he first discovered the escape of Paul and his companion, and liberated his sky-trailers, did not pause to reflect that the great, fierce creatures might slay his young captives.

At the head of his men he now dashed toward the pass that led from the valley, for it was not his purpose that Vava should be slain by the bearcoots.

"I was too rash. The little girl must be saved from the eagles. As to the boy, if he is killed I can conceal his death, and Ivan Verdroff will not know the truth until he is in my power, in case, as I hope, he comes to surrender himself to me to save his son," reflected Hargardar.

He quickly reached the nearly closed mouth of the cave where Paul and Vava had sought refuge from the eagles.

He heard their voices, and he saw the bearcoots vainly striving to gain an entrance.

"Oh, ho! so they have escaped? Well, it is better so. But, by my faith, good fortune must have placed the cave here for them," Hargardar muttered, and then he called out:

"Hello, within, there! Are you alive yet?"

"Yes, but no thanks to you who sent the cruel birds to kill us," retorted Paul, spiritedly.

The spy of the Third Section only laughed harshly, and he said:

"I have taught you a lesson; you will not try to run away again, I think, for I warn you that in case you do I shall send the eagles in pursuit of you, and another time there may not be a cave at hand to shelter you from them."

"You are a cruel coward!" Paul shouted back.

"He has the spirit of his father. I must watch him or he will escape yet," thought the spy, as he heard the boy's defiant words.

Mentally he added:

"I dare not permit him to escape now, for the secret of the child Vava's being in my power might then be revealed by him."

The great eagles were then hooded, and then secured.

"Come, men, you must remove the rock at the mouth of the cave with which they have walled themselves in," the spy of the Third Section ordered.

The Cossacks set to work with a will.

The united efforts of a dozen men accomplished the removal of the great rock that lay at the mouth of the cave.

Hargardar ordered the children to come forth, and they obeyed him.

Then they were conducted back to the camp of the Cossack.

Each was returned to the tent previously occupied, and guards were stationed about them.

Hargardar chose his most trusty men for this service, and he threatened to severely punish any dereliction of duty on their part.

"I shall hold you responsible for your charges, and if they escape you will regret it the longest day you live," said Hargardar to the guard, significantly.

Paul despaired now.

Vava also was hopeless.

The boy could sleep no more that night, and he lay upon the floor of the kибitka until day dawned.

He thought a great deal about the story Vava had told him, and he concluded that there was some mystery about her that he could not fathom.

As the purple glow of the dawn appeared on the western horizon far beyond the mountains, the camp of the Cossacks was hushed, and the air held a solemn stillness, as if nature were offering a silent prayer to the new day.

The gray light fell through the door of the kибitka, and it revealed to the eyes of the Nihilist's son something that suggested a possible way of eluding the vigilance of his guards.

The skin of a gray wolf hung from the wall, and Paul took it down and examined it. The skin was nearly perfect, and the boy enveloped himself in it, and secured it here and there with bits of deer-skin which he found in the lodge.

When he had done this, the boy placed himself upon his hands and feet, and if he had been able to look into a mirror he would have been gratified to see that he would pass for a real wolf at a short distance.

As it was, he felt pretty confident of the excellence of his wolf-garb, and then he tried to think of some expedient that might enable him to get out of the kибitka without being discovered by the guards.

Paul crept to the door on all-fours and peered out.

He saw that the guards about the lodge were on the alert and vigilant.

The admonition and threat made by Hargardar had not been forgotten by those fierce bronze warriors of the steppes.

They were determined that the captive intrusted to them should not escape through any fault of theirs.

A few moments' reflection convinced the Nihilist's son that it would be folly to attempt to leave the hut now, since day had come.

Paul crept away from the door again.

Then he hastily divested himself of his wolfish garb, and restored the skin to its place on the wall of the lodge.

"When night comes—if it is dark, without moonlight—I'll put on the wolf-skin, and perhaps I'll get clear of the camp in it," he thought.

Presently one of the Cossacks brought him some black bread and a bowl of koumiss, and of this frugal fare the boy made a hearty meal.

The day passed uneventfully, and Paul did not catch a glimpse of the little girl in whose fate he had become deeply interested, for he was not permitted to go outside of the lodge, and Vava was kept a close prisoner in the tent to which she had been consigned after her recapture.

Cossack scouts departed from the camp early in the morning, sent by Hargardar to scour the mountains for Ivan Verdroff and his wife.

"With Ivan Verdroff back in the mines, and doomed to toil in irons all his life without ever again seeing the light of day, I'll

find a way to make the lady Evadna my slave. I am expecting soon to be appointed governor of the mines of Timsk, and then I'll see to it that Ivan Verdroff does not live long."

Thus Hargardar reflected.

It was true that the Czar Alexander II. had hinted that, as a reward for the faithful services of the notorious spy of the Third Section, he thought of making him governor of the Timsk mines.

As Hargardar thought of the child Vava, he said, mentally:

"I am incurring a fearful risk in the matter of the Vishkoff girl, but Sultan Esa must shoulder the burden of the affair if I am found out. Should the Czar know of the hand I've had in the child's abduction, I fear that instead of becoming the governor of the mines of Timsk I would be more likely to be condemned to become a slave there, for Count Vishoff stands high in the favor of Alexander."

The day wore away, and a night of storm and darkness came.

The scouts sent out by Hargardar to search the mountains for the escaped Nihilists had mostly returned, and Paul gathered from the conversation of the guards at the door of the lodge that they had not succeeded in finding the Nihilist and his wife—his father and mother.

This information pleased the boy, as we may well suppose.

He had overheard certain remarks of his captors before this that led him to think that they had discovered evidences that served to convince them that the Nihilist and his wife had not perished in the avalanche, as we know.

It will be remembered that Paul knew of Hargardar's plot to hold him as a hostage and induce his father to surrender in order to save his son.

When the snow began to fall as night came, the boy was rejoiced.

"Let the snow fall. It will cover my parents' tracks if they are wandering in the mountains," Paul thought.

As the thought advanced the darkness became complete, and the storm increased in violence.

"Everything is favorable for my attempt to leave the camp in the garb of a wolf-skin, but I cannot think of now trying to secure Vava's escape. The child could not endure the cold. She would perish if exposed to it, I am sure, even if I succeeded in getting her safely out of the valley," thought Paul.

Sheets of snow were hurled in the faces of the guards of the Cossack camp, half blinding them, and the wild storm raged everywhere.

Paul again donned the wolf-skin and crept to the door of the tent, about which the snow had now formed a drift three feet or more in height.

There was a space between the wall of the kибитка and the drift, and watching his opportunity when the backs of the Cossack guards were turned toward him, the Nihilist's son stealthily crept out of the lodge and along between the lodge-wall and the snow-drift.

The voice of the storm made a pandemonium of sounds that would have drowned his footsteps even had the soft, velvety snow given forth a noise.

Past the guards Paul crept, imitating the motions of the four-footed animal he was impersonating.

The boy was at a considerable distance from the lodge in which he had been confined, when a couple of Cossacks, carrying a great flaming torch of resinous wood, came out of a tent.

"Ha, Mazin, there goes a skulking wolf yonder!" cried one of these men, pointing at Paul.

"Yes, and by the saints I'll have a shot at the mountain thief!" cried the other.

The Cossack's carbine leaped to his shoulder as he spoke, and taking a quick aim at the supposed wolf, he fired.

CHAPTER XII.

ADVENTURE OF THE NIHILIST'S SON.

As the carbine of the Cossack was discharged at him, Paul Verdroff plunged into a snow-drift which he had just reached.

The bullet from the weapon of the follower of Hargardar harmed him not, for, owing to the wind and snow that half blinded him, his aim was not correct.

The bullet passed over the boy as he vanished in the snow.

Paul emerged from the snow-drift on its opposite side, and darted away into the gloom beyond the circle of light that was cast by the torch in the hand of the Cossack.

Just as he crept out of the snow-drift, the carbine of the second Cossack cracked, and another bullet hurtled harmlessly by the boy.

On through the night—on through the blinding storm and the darkness—Paul fled.

He made for the pass leading from the valley, but owing to the intense gloom, he reached the mountain wall at a point beyond where the pass opened, leading from the valley.

As he crept along, searching for the defile, Paul heard the shouts and yells of the Cossacks, and he knew that the shouts of the men who had taken him for a wolf and fired at him had alarmed his foes.

Hargardar was seated in his tent with a bottle of vodka before him, and heedless of the storm, he was drinking deeply, while he thought of his plans and schemes for the future.

At the sound of the detonation of the carbines that were discharged at Paul, he sprung to his feet.

"What can that firing mean? I wonder if it is another escape!" he exclaimed, and rushing out of his tent he hastened to the kибитка, where Paul was placed when he was recaptured.

"Has the boy escaped again?" he demanded of the guards at the door of Paul's recent prison place as he reached them.

"No, hetman, no. He is safe within," answered the foremost of the guards, who, as well as the other men stationed there, was as yet ignorant of Paul's escape.

"I'll satisfy myself on that point by looking into the lodge," said Hargardar, and he passed the Cossacks and entered it.

One glance showed the police spy that the lodge was empty. He rushed forth and shouted:

"Fools! blind fools! the boy has walked right by you unseen! He has escaped. To the pass! To the pass!"

The astounded guards hastened to follow Hargardar, who, without delay, hastened toward the defile which led from the camp in the valley.

It was the hope of the police spy that he might reach the mountain pass in advance of the boy, and cut off his escape.

Hargardar dashed through the snow-drifts, and through the darkness, and presently he encountered the two Cossacks who had fired at Paul.

One of these men still carried the blazing torch, the light of which had revealed the Nihilist's son.

"Have you seen anything of our boy captive? The lad has escaped, and the report of two carbines that alarmed me came from this direction," said Hargardar, addressing the two Cossacks.

"No, we have not seen the boy. It was only a prowling wolf that drew our fire," replied one of the men.

"Strange that no one has sighted him," muttered Hargardar, as he continued on toward the defile.

Meanwhile, Paul had found the pass, and before Hargardar reached it, as he presently did, the boy was safely out of the valley, breasting the storm, and making his way in what he believed to be the direction of the cabin of old Madrack.

The police spy, when he reached the mouth of the pass, came to a halt, and turning to his followers, he said:

"We will remain here. If the boy has not escaped from the valley already, we will capture him when he appears here, as he will be sure to do. If he has left the valley, pursuit in this dark night of storm will be useless, and we cannot follow him until day breaks."

To this the Cossacks responded with a grunt of assent, and they formed themselves in line across the mouth of the pass.

Meanwhile, Paul kept on manfully.

But the gale beyond the confines of the sheltered valley was more severe than he had supposed, and at times he was almost swept from his feet, while the snow was hurled in great blinding, cutting billows over him.

The wolf-skin protected the boy admirably, and though he no longer imitated the manner of locomotion peculiar to the four-footed animal, he found his disguise warm and comfortable.

Paul wandered on and on.

Through the mountains he sped, until at last he sunk down exhausted and unable to proceed further.

The Nihilist's son had reached a sheltered glade, where a fallen larch-tree, the spreading limbs of which were covered with a mass of snow, extended in every direction.

Down beneath these branches Paul crept, and he was soon snugly ensconced under the fallen tree, well sheltered from the storm.

The fast-falling snow rapidly obliterated Paul's tracks, and covered the opening through which he had crawled under the tree.

Feeling secure, Paul curled up in his warm wolf-skin and soon fell asleep.

When he awoke he crept from his shelter, and thrusting his head up through the branches of the tree, he saw that the sun was up, and that the day had dawned bright and clear.

Paul put on the wolf-skin again, so as to counterfeit the appearance of a wolf, and then he emerged from under the tree.

For a moment or so Paul glanced about him in every direction, seeking to discover some land-mark by which he might guide himself to the hut of old Madrack.

The boy fancied that he recognized a certain tall mountain-peak in the distance as the summit of a lofty elevation behind the cabin of the old huntsman of the Baikals, and he bent his steps in its direction.

The snow had ceased to fall, and the sky was clear.

Objects could be distinctly seen for a considerable distance, where there were no mountains to obstruct the view.

Paul feared to walk erect, for fear that he might be discovered by some of Hargardar's scouts.

He knew that from some distant mountain-side the bronzed detectives of the Czar might sight him, while he was ignorant that he was discovered.

Paul had traveled through the snow for a distance of a verst or so from the shelter where he had passed the night, when, as he rounded a high ledge of rocks that seemed to form the abrupt end of a spur of the mountains, he came in sight of a band of Cossacks.

They belonged to Hargardar's band, and they were the party led by Saga, the scout from whom Ivan Verdroff had been rescued by Michael.

Even as the boy sighted the Cossacks, he was by them discovered, but, as he was moving along on all-fours, he was taken for a wolf.

Quickly Paul turned back and darted away, but three or four of the Cossacks were anxious to have a shot at "the wolf," and they started in pursuit of Paul.

The boy dodged here and there among the rocks, and he was soon out of sight, but his tracks left a plain trail in the snow.

By these tracks the Cossacks followed him, but they had not

proceeded far when they noticed that the tracks were not those of a wolf.

"By my faith!" cried one of the Cossacks, "this wolf has the feet and hands of a man or a boy. What is the meaning of this? Are we following some strange monster of the mountains?"

"Bah! Have you never heard of the 'wolf-men' of the Baikals? I have. These wild hunters of this range disguise themselves as wolves, it is said, in order to get near enough to the real animals for a shot without alarming them," said another.

"Well, we will overhaul this fellow, at all events, and see if he is one of your 'wolf-men,'" answered the Cossack who had spoken first, half sneeringly.

They increased their speed, and Paul soon found that his foes were fast gaining upon him.

The boy soon realized that his only hope of escaping lay in secreting himself in some snow-drift or cave, where he might not be discovered by the Cossacks.

The hunted boy at length crept into a snowy thicket.

Here he sunk down, panting and exhausted.

He could go no further.

If his life depended on it, he could not drag his weary limbs any further.

In an agony of suspense, Paul crouched down in the thicket and watched and listened for the coming of his foes.

He hoped that they might pass his hiding-place and fail to discover him, but he feared that they would not do so, for he knew that the Cossacks were lynx-eyed and cunning.

In a few moments the Cossacks came up.

A shout from the foremost of his pursuers informed Paul that they had discovered his retreat, and he saw them surround the thicket.

The boy saw that his heroic attempt at escape had failed.

It was for him a thrilling moment, as his foes closed in about him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HOME OF OLD MADRACK—A BATTLE WITH A BEAR.

The two Nihilists, Ivan Verdroff and Michael, arrived in safety at the cabin of the latter's father—old Madrack the hunter.

Golga, the tame bear, came frisking through the snow like a great Newfoundland dog, and he seemed delighted at Michael's return.

The sound of voices brought old Madrack and the lady Evadna Verdroff to the door of the cabin.

They were both surprised to see Ivan.

Michael's unexplained absence had alarmed them, but they had not expected Ivan to return so soon.

The Nihilist's wife came forward to meet him, and they embraced affectionately.

But Paul's mother's heart was sad as she thought that her husband had failed in his attempt to rescue his son from the hands of their foe.

"Have you seen Paul?" she asked, anxiously.

"No, my wife; I have not yet penetrated into the camp of Hargardar," replied the Nihilist.

Then he related his recent thrilling experiences.

Michael told of the discovery of the hut of his father.

"You are no longer safe here. You must seek a hiding-place, for the hounds of the police spy will be here in an hour or so, and your capture will be certain if you are found," said Michael.

"We shall not be found. I have a retreat the Cossacks will not discover—the mountain cave under the 'Giant's ledge.' You know the place, Michael," said old Madrack.

"Yes, I know the cavern, and I think it will afford you an excellent hiding-place," assented Michael.

"We should lose no time in moving there," said Ivan.

"Right. We will do so at once," replied Madrack.

He began to pack up his furs, and the contents of the cabin, with the assistance of the others, was quickly made into several bundles.

"You do not mean yet to abandon the attempt to rescue the boy?" said Paul's mother.

"No. My resolve to save him is as strong as ever, and I have in mind a plan to rescue him by entering the camp of the Cossacks."

"I knew you would not abandon our son," said the mother.

"We will first see you to a place of safety. Then I will again attempt to save Paul," replied Ivan.

He shouldered one of the great bundles containing the furniture of the hut, and Michael and his father also carried heavy packs.

The cave that old Madrack led them to was so well concealed that the fugitives felt themselves very secure. Of course Golga, the bear, was taken along.

"We can remain here for an indefinite period of time. Father and I will spend certain hours in hunting, and thus gain a daily supply of food," said Michael.

"I regret that I left the clothing you took from the Cossack in the hut. I had purposed to use it for a disguise. In the garb of the dead Cossack I had hoped to rescue my son," Ivan Verdroff said.

"It is not too late now, it may be, for I saw you carry the clothing of the Cossack into the cellar of my father's hut," said Michael.

"Are you sure that I took the Cossack's clothing into the cellar? If so, it may be as you say. The clothing may yet be recovered," assented Ivan.

When darkness fell old Madrack left the cave.

Ivan and Michael had both spoken of making a visit to the dwelling of the old hunter, but Madrack said:

"Remain here for the present. It is not necessary that we should all leave the cave. I can accomplish what is wanted. I will visit the old hut that has been my home so long, and I will bring you the clothing of the Cossack, if I find it. When I return you shall have food."

The old hunter left the cave by way of an opening of which he had told the others.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAUL IN THE HANDS OF THE COSSACKS.

We must not too long desert Paul, the Nihilist's son, as his adventures form a considerable portion of our narrative.

As the hunted boy crouched down in the snow-clad thicket, the Cossacks, who had surrounded his retreat, continued to advance upon him.

Their leveled spears were pointed at the cover where Paul had secreted himself, and he knew that retreat or escape was impossible.

The boy was aware that his daring ruse to secure his escape was doomed to inglorious failure.

He put on a resolute air, and presently an old Cossack called out:

"Come out and surrender yourself, Sir Man Wolf. We have seen your tracks, and know you."

Paul divested himself of his wolf-robe.

With the wolf-skin on his shoulder he crept out of the thicket.

He made his appearance just as the irritable old Cossack was about to discharge his weapon, but the latter at once lowered it when he saw the boy.

The Cossacks were highly pleased, and they hurried Paul back to the main body of Saga's band.

The advent of the boy among the main band of the Cossacks was hailed with shouts of satisfaction.

Saga said:

"If now we can capture the Nihilist and his companions at the hut I discovered, we'll make a clean sweep of our task."

They pressed on in the direction of Madrack's home.

When they reached the abode of the old hunter they found it deserted.

"The birds have flown; but the chances are that they will return. We will secrete ourselves in the neighborhood and leave one sentry on the watch. If by chance any of the Nihilist brood should venture back to the nest after nightfall, we will be at hand to capture them," said Saga.

He posted one man in a snow-clad growth of larch and stunted Arctic pines, and the remainder of the party withdrew.

They retired behind a ridge near by, and it was agreed that a shout from the solitary sentinel they had posted near the hut should bring them to his assistance.

The man left on guard in the thicket near old Madrack's hut kept a sharp lookout, his mind filled with thoughts of the punishment Hargardar, as the representative of the Third Section, might inflict on him if he neglected his duty.

Some hours passed, and the day drew to a close at last.

Several times Saga visited the spy.

At midnight he was relieved.

Night came at last, and, as we have said, it was bright and pleasant.

Now, Saga's watchman was doubly vigilant.

He detected the patter of a skulking wolf's feet upon the snow-crust while yet the animal was at a distance.

These Cossacks of Siberia are keen of hearing and of sight.

At this hour, old Madrack had left the cave to which he had guided Ivan Verdroff and his wife, and now the old Baikal mountaineer was swiftly approaching the hut he had left so hurriedly.

As he neared the hut, old Madrack proceeded with the greatest caution.

When he reached the neighborhood of his hut, old Madrack came to a halt behind a great snow-clad rock and took a look forward.

He could command a view of his home from his post of observation, and he saw no one—nothing to alarm him or awaken his suspicion that there was any living thing, man or beast, in the neighborhood.

Having seen nothing to awaken his fears, old Madrack emerged from the shelter of the rock behind which he had paused and strode toward the hut.

The spy of the Cossacks, secreted in the thicket, saw him.

The sentinel made a signal, and Saga comprehended it, as did also his men.

They advanced silently and gained the side of the spy.

Peering through the thicket, they saw old Madrack enter the hut.

Then the Cossacks stealthily crept to the door.

"When he comes out we will strike him down and capture him," said Saga.

Meanwhile, old Madrack having entered his hut, was searching for the clothing of the Cossack, which Ivan Verdroff desired to recover.

In the cellar Madrack discovered the object of his search, and he made the garb of the dead Cossack, and a quantity of dried meat, black bread, and other provisions which he had stored in the cellar, into a pack, and secured it upon his back by means of a strap.

Old Madrack was leaving the cabin.

He had gained the door, and passed through it, when one

of the Cossacks crouching there dealt him a blow on the head with his spear.

The old mountaineer fell.

In a moment his foes were upon him.

The blow he had received stunned him, and he offered no resistance.

His hands were bound behind his back.

Then Saga uttered a shout, and the rest of the Cossack force came up, bringing Paul with them.

The Nihilist's son saw the old man who had befriended him a captive, and he longed to help him.

Just at this time, however, he was powerless to do so.

"I'll make him tell where the other birds are. Bring the old fellow into the hut," ordered Saga, striding into the old mountaineer's abode.

A moment later a shout was heard, and Hargardar himself was seen advancing, followed by a band of Cossacks.

When Hargardar saw Paul he was well pleased, and he said:

"You shall be well rewarded, my men."

Saga told him all that had occurred.

In conclusion he said:

"I am sure the old fellow I have captured knows where Ivan Verdroff and his wife are hidden."

"Such is my belief also," said the herculean half-Finlander with whom old Madrack and his bear had fought.

"Then, by my faith, we will make this Baikal man speak! He shall tell us where to find the exiles, or we will put him to the torture!" cried Hargardar, and he strode into the hut where old Madrack lay.

"Speak, old man. Tell me where to find Ivan Verdroff and his wife, or I'll burn the truth out of you! I am satisfied that you know the hiding-place of the people I seek, and no denial will serve you!" cried Hargardar.

"Old Madrack always speaks the truth. You may murder him, you accursed spy; but he will never betray a friend!" answered the huntsman.

"Then heat the torture-irons!" ordered Hargardar, turning to his men.

CHAPTER XV.

HEMMED IN BY FIRE.

In obedience to the command of the police spy, one of the Cossacks produced a large iron instrument, not unlike a pair of tongs.

A roaring fire was made in the deep fire-place in the hut, and as the logs were heaped there and the red flames sprung up to devour them the Cossack who had produced the torture-irons thrust them into the blaze.

Paul had been brought within the hut.

The door was guarded, and most of the Cossacks were without, only Hargardar, Saga, the giant half-Finlander, and a few others being within it.

Paul watched the preparations for the torture of the old mountaineer with horror.

Suddenly there was a great crash.

Through the door that was at this moment dashed open rushed Golga, old Madrack's great bear.

The fierce animal's jaws were distended and his roars shook the hut.

As Golga charged forward into the hut, the Cossacks there, including Hargardar, sprung aside, and hastened to escape from the room.

They paused not to secure their carbines, which stood stacked in the corner.

Each one seemed intent on being the first to leave the place, and they crowded through the door pell-mell, and in the greatest confusion.

As the Cossacks fled Paul made a leap, and snatched up a knife that lay on the floor, which one of the foe had dropped.

He reached old Madrack's side, and with a few swift slashes he severed the thongs with which the old hunter was bound.

Madrack regained his feet.

He crossed the cabin and seized a carbine, while Golga, the bear, frisked about him, manifesting his joy at finding his master.

Meanwhile the hot irons had fired the heap of dry twigs among which they had fallen, and they now burst into flames.

Through the door old Madrack discharged his carbine at the Cossacks, who now seemed about to charge into the hut.

Dropping the weapon, he snatched up another and fired again.

This weapon, too, was cast aside, and another was instantly in the old hunter's hands.

He fired in rapid succession, until all the carbines the Cossacks had left in the cabin were discharged.

There was no ammunition there.

The hunter and the boy could not reload the carbines.

The Cossacks gathered for a charge.

The fire that had commenced among the heap of twigs was now a fierce flame.

It leaped up the sides of the hut.

"We cannot remain here," cried old Madrack.

"No—to tarry here means to be consumed by the fire," said Paul.

It was so.

The Cossacks were without, threatening to seize the imperiled ones the moment they emerged from the hut.

The flames would devour them if they remained within the shelter.

"Golga has been trained to carry burdens and he shall carry you. Mount the bear," said the old hunter.

Paul hesitated.

"Fear not. He will follow me, and I shall escape. I feel an assurance in my heart that my hour has not yet come."

Thus said Madrack, in a tone of conviction.

Paul delayed no longer, but mounted the monster Baikal bear.

The boy grasped the long, rough hair about the animal's neck, and then old Madrack rushed out of the hut, and the bear bounded at his heels.

Several carbines were discharged at old Madrack, but two wild, desperate leaps carried him into the shelter of a thicket snow-covered and white.

Through the thicket the bear crashed.

In an instant the Cossacks were in pursuit.

They came on at headlong speed.

Old Madrack was swift-footed, despite his age, as we have seen.

He led the Cossacks a long race. But his limbs now gave out.

Old Madrack was run down at last.

The huntsman staggered and clutched at the snow-covered rocks of a defile which he had reached, in order to sustain himself from falling.

The bear halted.

"I can run no further, and the bear cannot carry double," said old Madrack.

"Oh, is there no hope—no assistance that we can call to our aid?"

This cry was wrung from Paul by despair.

"Stay! There is one chance left. My Baikal horn is slung from my back. I will blow a shrill blast upon it, and if there is a huntsman of the Baikals within hearing, he will hasten to my aid," said old Madrack, as he thought of the horn.

The old mountaineer instantly placed his horn to his lips.

Then a long, wild blast reverberated through the mountains,

and the echoes caught it up and repeated it again and again, as though a thousand elfin voices were mocking the huntsman.

Old Madrack staggered desperately on again, and the bear, still ridden by the Nihilist's son, followed him.

The wild exultant shouts of Hargardar came near now.

But suddenly, close at hand, a clear distinct blast answered the voice of old Madrack's horn.

"Friends are at hand!" cried old Madrack.

"Thank Providence!" exclaimed Paul, fervently.

Then old Madrack again placed his horn to his lips, and blew it once more.

It was promptly answered, and in a few moments, in advance of them, the huntsman of the Baikals, and the boy saw a band of nearly a score of Baikal mountaineers coming down the mountainside.

The shrill blast old Madrack had blown said to his brothers of the mountains as plainly as words: "Help! help! for a brother pursued by a foe!"

The mountaineers so understood it.

They were ready for a charge.

The Cossacks came dashing at Madrack and the Nihilist's son, and Hargardar was sure they were at his mercy.

In another moment old Madrack and Paul would have been overpowered by the Cossacks, but just then the Baikal mountaineers whom old Madrack's horn had called to the rescue came in sight.

They comprehended the situation at a glance, and they had no love for the emissaries of the czar, for many of them were Nihilists, and they were sworn to defend a brother. Moreover, old Madrack was high in office in the "Chapter" of Nihilists that had been organized in the Baikals.

The heavy lances of the mountaineers were leveled.

Silently they charged the Cossacks.

They never shout.

Hargardar and his men recoiled before that fierce onset of the bronzed mountain men, and then, as the Baikal dwellers advanced to follow up their advantage, a short running fight ensued.

But the Cossacks could not stem the furious tide of another charge, which was presently made, and they broke and fled.

A few words of explanation passed between old Madrack and his friends.

Then, surrounded by them, he and the boy hurried away.

The bear upon which the Nihilist's son was mounted went frisking along near the edge of a precipice that ran along the side of the mountain, and as bruin's fore paws went down into a hole in the rocks, Paul was thrown from his back upon the shelving, icy edge of the abyss.

In an instant he went over the edge of the gulch and shot downward into space, while a cry of horror went up from the old hunter and the others.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD MADRACK'S RETURN.

Old Madrack ran to the edge of the dizzy fall down which Paul Verdroff had slipped, and peered down into its dark depths.

There was nothing to be seen.

The moonlight revealed only a mass of snow and ice at the bottom of the canyon.

"Paul—Paul!" shouted old Madrack, but the boy answered not.

Though the old man called many times, the only reply returned was the echo of his own voice.

There was no way to descend into the canyon at this point.

Old Madrack knew, though, that he could reach the bed of the gulch by traversing a distance of a trifle less than a verst.

The Baikal dwellers were all willing to serve the old hunter in any way.

The boy's old friend led the way forward.

At last they reached the bed of the canyon.

It was then necessary to retrace their steps until they reached the place where Paul had fallen over the edge.

Floundering through the drifts, they perseveringly advanced until they reached the place where Paul had fallen.

The marks they discovered told them that Paul had fallen into a great drift, and that he was not much hurt they knew, because they found his tracks leading along the bed of the gulch in a direction opposite to which they had come.

"The boy lives!" cried old Madrack, delightedly.

He and his friends continued to follow the plain trail the boy had left in the snow.

They reached the place where the gulch came out upon the plain, among the mountains of which old Madrack had told them.

Here they found other tracks besides those of the boy, and in a moment they recognized them as the footprints of Cossacks.

"This seems like fate. Here are the signs of a struggle. The boy has been recaptured again, but the brave lad made a good fight for his liberty, I am sure," said old Madrack.

His regret was bitter.

He hoped until this moment to restore the boy to his father.

Again they pressed forward.

But the Cossacks had a long start, and they reached the valley where Hargardar's permanent camp was located before the mountain men overtook them.

To attack Hargardar's entire force in the valley old Madrack knew would be folly, and so he dismissed the mountain men, after thanking them earnestly for the assistance they had rendered him.

Then he spied about the camp of the Cossacks, until he satisfied himself that Paul was really there.

When he had caught sight of the boy, old Madrack stealthily crept away, and attended by the bear, he made his way in the direction of the cave where he had left Ivan Verdroff and his companions.

Paul's capture was brought about in the following way:

One of the Cossacks chanced to look down into the gulch into which Paul had fallen some time after the fight between them and the Baikal mountaineers, as the former retreated in the direction taken by Paul along the bed of the canyon.

The Cossack saw the Nihilist's son, and he at once communicated his discovery to Hargardar, who was bent upon taking the boy by surprise when he came out of the gulch.

To accomplish this, Hargardar's band followed along the side of the abyss, keeping out of Paul's sight.

Thus it was that when Paul came out upon the plateau the foe he dreaded was there to secure him.

Paul—as the marks in the snow served to assure old Madrack—had really made a heroic fight to save himself; but what could a boy of his age do against an armed force of men?

His resistance only amused the Cossacks, and they quickly secured him and marched him back to the valley, where they arrived in safety, as we have seen.

Old Madrack's prolonged silence from the cave alarmed the friends he had left there.

"I am sure my father has fallen into danger. Perhaps he has been captured by Hargardar. I think I will go in search of him," said Michael, when at last he could bear the suspense of uncertainty regarding his father's fate no longer.

Ivan could not but share Michael's anxiety.

While the friends in the cave were thus conversing, they heard the sound of footsteps, and presently, to the joy of all, old Madrack and his tame bear appeared.

In a few words the old hunter related the exciting adventures that had befallen him since he left the cave.

"Through it all I have carried the pack on my back that contains the Cossack suit of clothing you wanted so much, Ivan, and I have also brought food as I promised," said the old man, in conclusion.

Then he removed the pack from his back and opened it.

The provisions it contained were spread out, and as all the fugitives were very hungry, they ate heartily.

Never did a costly banquet relish as did that coarse black bread and dried meat.

After the food was partaken of, Ivan unfolded his plan to utilize the suit of the Cossack to secure the escape of his son.

"Disguised as the dead man to whom this suit belonged, I mean to enter the camp of Hargardar," he said.

The night was now too far advanced for Paul's father to think of making any attempt at his rescue until darkness came again, and so he sought the sleep he needed, as did all the other members of the hunted party.

The night wore to a close.

Nothing worthy of note occurred, and day dawned bright and beautiful, but only an obscure light penetrated the cave.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER POLICE SPY.

While the events we have last recorded were taking place, a party of twelve gendarmes, led by a stalwart man clad in costly furs, were making their way over the snow of the Kirghez steppes, and their course shaped toward the Baikal mountains.

Among this band of men there was a single prisoner.

The captive was a wild nomad—one of those wandering Tartars, who are as restless as "The Wandering Jew."

The party we are describing had originally come from Moscow.

They had proceeded from that city to the camp of the Tartar chief, Sultan Esa, whom Vava Vishkoff, Hargardar's girl captive, had said was her uncle, and from whom she had also stated she was stolen while she slept.

The leader of the gendarmes from Moscow was Nicholas Parva, a police spy, second only to Hargardar in fame. This man, moreover, was Hargardar's rival for the appointment of the mines of Timsk.

The disappearance of Vava Vishkoff had been reported by Sultan Esa to the little girl's father, and although the child's Tartar relative professed the greatest grief at her loss, Count Vishkoff suspected that the sultan was at the bottom of the child's abduction when he read a letter sent him by the Tartar.

This communication stated that the sultan believed that it would be only possible for himself, at an enormous expense, to ransom Vava from the mountain robbers, whom he accused of having stolen her, and he added in his letter that he would undertake to restore Vava to her father, great as the expense and danger would be, provided the governor would not compel him to pay certain taxes which the czar had imposed upon him.

Count Vishkoff knew that the Tartar sultan was unscrupulous and cunning, and he was also aware that he hated him.

He fancied he saw through the sultan's plot, and so he dispatched Nicholas Parva to the Tartar's abode, and ordered him to find out the truth, and rescue his child from whosoever might hold her a captive at any cost.

Parva had gone alone to the sultan, and the cunning spy had found out the wild nomad who had abducted the daughter of the governor.

When the spy had accomplished this he sent for the gendarmes.

Then the nomad was arrested and frightened into a confession.

He stated that the sultan had employed him to carry Vava to the hut of a certain peasant—a dweller of the steppes, and that he had left her there.

The sultan was placed under arrest, and with the nomad, and the division of his gendarmes we have mentioned, Nicholas Parva was now in search of Vava.

Meanwhile the news of the abduction of the daughter of the governor of Eastern Siberia had reached St. Petersburg, and the Czar heard of the affair.

As has been previously stated, Vava's father was a great favorite with the emperor of Russia, and he forthwith took certain measures which he hoped would lead to the finding of Vava, and her restoration to her father.

What these measures were we shall see at the proper time, as they have a bearing on the fate of our friends.

The gendarmes, under Nicholas Parva, arrived at the hut of the peasant from whom Hargardar had received Vava one night at sunset.

The dweller of the steppes, a rude and ignorant fellow, was frightened almost to death at the appearance of the gendarmes.

He readily confessed that the child the police officer sought had for a short time been intrusted to his care, but he vowed that he had no knowledge of her identity, and that the man who had brought her to him—the wild nomad—had brought an order for Vava's detention, until a man who would present an order called for her. Both orders were to be signed by the Sultan Esa.

The peasant produced the sultan's order to hold the child, and also a similar order of the sultan, directing him to deliver her to the bearer.

The steppe-dweller did not know Hargardar, and he had never even heard his name.

Nicholas Parva was impressed with the truth of the peasant's statement.

"Describe to me the man to whom you delivered the child!" he commanded.

The peasant did so.

He was an observing fellow, and his description of Hargardar was quite accurate.

Nicholas Parva started.

"By my faith! you have described one of the spies of the Third Section—a man much overrated, though," said Hargardar's rival, and he mentally added:

"Now this is most remarkable. If I could only implicate Hargardar in the stealing of the child, his career would be ended, and the one man who has always stood in the way of my advancement would be got rid of."

The poor fellow then gave the direction in which Hargardar had ridden away with the governor's daughter, and the police agent and his men started in pursuit.

As the gendarmes rode along one evening when they were near the Baikals, one of them picked up a bit of ribbon which Vava had worn in her hair.

"The fellow who carried off the child still has her with him, it seems," said Nicholas Parva, with satisfaction.

Little did the exultant Hargardar dream that the one man in Siberia who was his rival and his secret foe was hanging on his trail like an avenging nemesis at the very time when he congratulated himself that he had naught to fear.

The snow storm which we have described delayed the advance of Nicholas Parva.

The storm, which was so fierce in the mountains, was also severe on the steppes.

Before nightfall, what we call a "blizzard" in the western part of America was raging.

In this storm the gendarmes' guide lost his way.

They were short of rations.

It began, therefore, to look as though the enemy of Hargardar might perish on the steppes.

But, leaving Nicholas Parva, we must return to follow the fortunes of the escaping Nihilists who were meeting with more thrilling adventures.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IVAN FAILS TO RESCUE PAUL.

While old Madrack knew that at any time he could call the Baikal mountaineers to his assistance, he wished not to involve them in difficulties with the police that might in the future bring upon them serious trouble.

It was this consideration that caused old Madrack to dismiss his Nihilistic brethren of the mountains.

In the winter the Baikal men are always at leisure, it would seem, and one may ask how they live.

The mountains possess the solitude and vastness of the desert, and a silence broken only by the shriek of a vulture, the howl of a wolf, or the voice of some other denizen of the thickets.

The scattered inhabitants of the barren mountain range live in rough-hewn huts, which at the proper season still shoot forth branches from knotty, powerful trunks.

When a human creature passes it is an event in the solitary lives of the mountain-dwellers.

Immediately his dogs begin to bark.

Coveys of mountain grouse fly swifter than the eye can follow them into the snowy brushwood.

These birds are similar to our quails.

The mountaineers live on black bread, they sleep at least fourteen hours a day, seek eagerly for vodka, which they drink with fierce pleasure and to obtain it hunt the bear, the lynx, and the wild cat, whose skins enjoy considerable repute.

When spring comes the sky turns bluer at the breath of the new life that is coming, and the mountaineer quits his hut, rejoicing in his heart that the dreary winter is over.

Now he expresses the vague pleasure that pervades him in melancholy chants that are filled with a sad monotony of strange, wild measures. Now the active life of the mountaineer really begins.

It is in the summer that the caravans from China and Mongolia, as well as far eastern Siberia, cross the Baikals, and the mountaineer often finds employment with them.

The Baikal dwellers act as guides and serve as hunters for caravans, and their services are invaluable.

Then, too, they now engage in tilling the rather fertile soil of the mountain plateaus, but most of the labor attendant on this industry devolves upon the women of the tribe.

The Baikal dweller is not inclined to agricultural pursuits.

Like the American Indian, he prefers the chase.

All these facts regarding the but little known race of people who inhabit the vast range of mountains which are the scene of the principal events of our story, were related to Ivan Verdroff by old Madrack as they conversed in the mountain cave.

The old huntsman was fond of dwelling upon the customs and peculiarities of his people, and it was as pride and boast that they were the most hardy race of men in Russia.

This, their history, would seem, too, was the truth, for they always retained their independence, though nominally subjects of the czar.

The night of old Madrack's return passed, and day dawned cloudy and snowy.

When all was finished, and Ivan Verdroff said that he was ready to set out for the Cossack camp, his companions were satisfied that his disguise would not be likely to betray him.

"I shall enter Hargardar's camp after dark, and before morning dawns I shall attempt Paul's rescue," the Nihilist said.

Then he took a tender farewell of his wife.

Michael and his father accompanied him to the entrance of the cave, but the Nihilist would not hear of their going further with him.

Then, pressing the hands of his friends, Ivan Verdroff strode out of the cave, and his late-comrades watched him until his tall form was lost to view in the distance.

Ivan reached Hargardar's camp and entered it, being taken for the Cossack that had been frozen and whose uniform he wore. But while there, and waiting a chance to rescue his son Paul, a Cossack entered the camp, saying he had found the body of the dead Cossack, minus his uniform. Hargardar suspected that all was not right, and a hunt was made for Ivan, who had feared he had been recognized and had slipped out of the camp. He was pursued, but succeeded in escaping. Therefore his attempt to rescue Paul had been unsuccessful. Ivan hurried back in the direction of the cave, but in a little while a subject of vital importance occurred to him which made him pause and consider.

CHAPTER XIX.

HARGARDAR'S FOE.

Nicholas Parva and his party were left wandering in the snow, having lost their way in a storm.

The wild nomad of the plains, who was at once the captive and guide of the force of the police spy who was Hargardar's rival for royal favor, was at fault, as we have stated, and it will be recollected that the party were running short of provisions, and that their situation was becoming alarming.

The storm, when it cleared away, revealed the sky, in which several great Asiatic vultures—who follow travelers to feed upon the refuse left at their camps—were circling now.

Presently, far away, a single faintly defined mountain peak became visible as a great bank of low-lying clouds that had concealed it drifted by.

The nomad who guided the party of Nicholas Parva possessed the keenness of vision peculiar to all the inhabitants of the Khirgez steppes, and he was the first to see the mountain peak.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, in accents of delight. "There is the Giant's Head, as yonder peak is called. I know where we are now."

This assurance on the part of the guide was a source of pleasure and rejoicing for the entire party.

The guide led the way forward with confidence now.

"We shall soon have food now, my masters," he said, "for the foothills of the Baikals will be reached when we have traversed a few versts, and there we shall find a station of the mountain patrol. I know the place well, and will lead you directly to it."

"Make haste, then. We are traveling too slow," replied Nicholas Parva.

He was a man of a nervous and impatient disposition, and he was happy only when engaged in active and exciting duty.

Nicholas Parva was now consumed with impatience to overtake the unknown abductor of Vava Vishkoff, whom he suspected was Hargardar the police spy.

As the party hastened forward with renewed hope and courage, Nicholas Parva drew from an interior pocket of his reindeer-skin coat an official-looking document, and ran his eyes over it.

The document was an order authorizing Nicholas Parva to arrest any person who might be found holding the daughter of the governor of Eastern Siberia a captive.

The warrant of arrest was duly stamped with the Russian eagle and signed by the czar, and also by the father of the missing girl.

The station of the mountain patrol, of which the guide had

told Parva and his men, was reached in a short time, and the officer in charge of the post welcomed Nicholas Parva and his men cordially as soon as they made known their mission.

The police spy hastened to inquire about the man whom he was pursuing.

It chanced that the patrol officer of this the first station in the mountains was aware of Hargardar's presence in the mountains, although, as we know, his brethren more remotely located were ignorant of this fact until Ivan informed them.

The patrol officer was not aware of Vava's being with Hargardar, as the latter had returned for her and secretly brought her into the mountains and to his camp after it was established in the valley.

In answer to the questions of Nicholas Parva, the police spy, the officer of the mountain patrol told the former of Hargardar's being in the mountains in quest of some fugitives from the mines of Timsk.

Provisions consisting of the inevitable black bread, brick tea, koumis and dry meats were hastily placed before Nicholas Parva by the attendants of the officer of the patrol.

As soon as the food provided by the patrol officer had been partaken of, Nicholas Parva and his force resumed their march.

They were led now by a Cossack guide, who was all that the officer of the patrol had assured Nicholas he was.

The party proceeded slowly, exploring all the sheltered nooks and defiles as they went along, for of course they knew that they might come upon the camp they sought at any time.

But although the day passed without bringing the discovery he sought, Nicholas Parva was not disposed to be in the least discouraged, although he was exceedingly impatient at the delay in finding the man whom he was now almost positive was the abductor of Vava Vishkoff.

On the following day the force of Nicholas Parva encountered a small party of Baikal hunters.

From these mountain-dwellers the police spy hoped to gain information of the man he sought, but the mountaineers professed entire ignorance of Hargardar's whereabouts.

The truth was, however, these men were members of the secret "chapter" of the Nihilists of the Baikals to which old Madrack belonged.

They did not wish to favor any project of the czar's.

Although they had seen the camp of the Cossacks led by Hargardar, they would not aid the emissary of the police by giving him any information.

The guide who had been furnished Nicholas Parva by the patrol officer said when the mountaineers had passed on:

"Those fellows will never aid us if they can avoid it. They have no love for the great father at St. Petersburg, and some day they will come out in open rebellion against him and cause a great deal of trouble."

"I will recollect what you have said, and so report on my return to Moscow," said the police spy.

CHAPTER XX.

A CAPTURE AND AN ESCAPE.

The following day was the time set by Hargardar for the death of Paul if his father failed to surrender himself to him.

The parent was naturally desperate, and in a moment he determined to make that night one more last effort for Paul's salvation.

He set out for Hargardar's camp again.

Ivan Verdroff made a detour, and approached the valley in which the camp of Hargardar was situated in such a direction as not to encounter the Cossacks who were on his trail.

Through the pass he entered the valley, and dropping upon his hands and knees, and keeping behind the snow-drifts as much as possible, he made his way toward the lodge in which Paul was guarded.

No alarm was given.

Ivan Verdroff reached Paul's prison-place undiscovered.

Through the aperture which he had made in the wall of the kibitka when he had previously visited it, Ivan Verdroff in a whispered address his son.

"Paul! Paul!" he said.

"Father!" answered the boy, as he recognized his father's voice again.

The boy could scarcely credit the evidence of his senses.

He had supposed that his father would not venture there again.

"This time I mean to save you," said the father, "and I trust I shall not again be detected."

Then with his knife he enlarged the opening in the wall of the kibitka until it was wide enough to permit Paul to creep through it.

A moment later the Nihilist's son was clasped in his father's arms.

But the danger was by no means passed.

They had yet to make their escape from the valley.

Now it chanced that after Ivan had left the cave one of the patrol stumbled on the tracks of the fugitive of the cave and reconnoitered, finding the mouth of the cave and hearing the voices of the Nihilists inside.

He at once hastened to Hargardar's camp and acquainted the officer in charge, Hargardar being absent at the time, of his discovery.

He was given a detachment of Cossacks and he hastened back to the cave, bent on capturing its inmates.

The detachment of the mountain patrol sent out to effect the capture of the inmates of the cavern arrived at the entrance through which the patrol who had discovered the fugitives entered when he had played the part of a spy upon them that same evening.

With noiseless, stealthy footsteps they crept into the cavern.

At this hour the lady Evadna slept, old Madrack dozed, and Michael alone was wide awake.

When the mountain patrol neared the cliff entrance of the cavern, they advanced with still greater effort to preserve profound silence.

It was their wish to take the fugitives by surprise, and thus capture them without difficulty.

The darkness concealed them, and even Golga, the bear, did not detect their presence, for the huge animal was snoring at the feet of Madrack.

When the patrol force arrived at the edge of the circle of moonlight reflected into the cave through the opening in the cliff wall, they halted.

Then at a signal they rushed forward.

The first intimation received by the exiles of their presence was a shout which the patrol men uttered as they charged upon them.

Old Madrack bounded to his feet and discharged his carbine at the throng of dark forms he beheld rushing at him like a legion of the realms of gloom.

At the same time Michael's weapon rung out.

The lady Evadna sprung to her feet, and a scream of terror burst from her lips.

Golga, the bear, aroused from his sleep, dashed among the patrol force, uttering fierce growls and savage roars that made the cavern ring.

The change from the silence that had but a moment preceded the arrival of the patrol force reigned within the cave was like that from the chamber of death to a mob of howling maniacs.

The charge of the patrol force was irresistible, and battling with all the heroism and desperate valor that was born of the thought that capture meant a fate worse than death, old

Madrack and Michael were borne back upon the edge of the abyss, where a fall meant destruction.

Perhaps they would have taken a fatal leap down into the dark gulch, but a blow from a clubbed carbine felled Michael, and half a dozen patrolmen clutched old Madrack, and dragged him backward and hurled him to the ground.

The huntsman of the Baikals and his heroic son were quickly secured.

Meanwhile, sorely wounded, the bear had dragged himself away and hidden himself in a remote nook.

A patrolman had seized the lady Evadna when the fight began, and the lady had fainted from fright.

A couple of torches with which the patrol had come provided were now ignited, and as the resinous wood blazed up a bright light was afforded, and the darkness was dispelled.

The patrol hurried their prisoners from the cave, and a rapid march brought them back to the patrol station in a short time.

The officer of the patrol had been informed of Hargardar's presence in the mountains by the men who had accompanied Ivan Verdroff within sight of the camp of the police spy.

"We will deliver these persons to the representative of the 'Third Section.' It may be that he is in pursuit of them. I credit not that the motive assigned by the Cossack, whom my men encountered, for Hargardar's presence in the mountains is the true one," said the officer.

Then he gave the order to conduct the captives without further delay to the camp of Hargardar.

The lady Evadna contemplated the prospect of falling into the power of Hargardar with feelings of horror.

She implored the officer of the patrol not to deliver her up to the dread police spy.

The officer was relentless, and he refused to listen to the prayer of the lady.

As for old Madrack and his son, those iron-nerved men murmured not, nor asked any favor.

With grim, resolute faces they confronted the fate that had overtaken them, and silently awaited the issue.

Escorted by a dozen of the patrol force, the three captives were marched away for the camp of the man they all dreaded.

It seemed that after all their adventures, all their heroic struggles and desperate ventures, they were to fail to escape from the terrible prison lands of Siberia.

But the lady Evadna was desperate now, and suddenly, as the little party of fugitives were being hurried forward by their captors, the Nihilist sprang aside, rushed into a snow-covered coppice, and was out of sight in an instant.

Several of the patrol men darted in pursuit of the lady.

Fear seemed to lend speed to the feet of the Nihilist's wife, or she fled on beyond the thicket with incredible swiftness.

She led her pursuers a much longer chase than they anticipated, but at last the false strength of frantic despair that had for a brief time sustained her was exhausted, and she sank down in the snow.

The lady was lifted up and carried back to the patrol party, and, supported by two of their number, she was again hurried forward.

"Is there no hope, no salvation for me? Oh, Ivan—Ivan, my husband, save me—save me!" cried the despairing woman, frantically, forgetful of the fact that her voice could not be heard by him to whom her entreaty was addressed.

She looked up into the leaden sky from which the snow was falling, and a feeling of unutterable desperation took possession of her heart, for she could discern not one ray of hope in the dark future.

Forgetful was the Nihilist's wife that it is sometimes darkest before the dawn.

Onward through the snow the march continued.

At last the camp of Hargardar was seen from the mountain-

side, and the patrol shaped their course so as to enter the valley through the pass which we have frequently mentioned.

In a few moments the captives knew that they would be in the presence of Hargardar, the dreaded, merciless one.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, Paul and his father, after the boy had crept out of the lodge in which he had been held a captive, conversed for a moment.

Of the little girl, Vava Vishkoff, the lad told his father, and he said:

"I would that we could rescue her. I have promised to do so if I could, and I would give much to make good my word. The Cossacks do not keep a strict watch over her—that is to say, they are not as vigilant in guarding her as they have been in guarding me. I can lead you to the tent she occupies, and it may be that we can save her. Are you willing to make the attempt?"

"Yes, my son; I would leave no unfortunate one in the power of Hargardar if it is within my power to save her," answered Ivan Verdroff.

Then Paul led the way to the tent occupied by Vava.

Creeping along in the snow with a silence and stealth equaled only by the prowling wolf, the Nihilist and his son gained the shelter which was Vava's prison.

They were not discovered.

A solitary guard stood leaning upon his carbine at the door of the lodge.

The hood of his deerskin cloak was drawn over his head, almost concealing his face, which it sheltered from the snow, and he seemed to be dozing.

Ivan drew his knife and slit up the wall of the tent.

"Vava!" said Paul.

The little girl heard, and answered in a whisper.

As soon as she knew that Paul had come to save her, she glided out of the tent through the opening Ivan Verdroff's knife had made.

Then, led by Paul's father, the Nihilist's son and Vava followed him, hand in hand, toward the pass.

It was reached in safety, and a few moments later the rescued ones were hastening on their way toward the cave where Ivan had left his wife and his mountain friends.

As they went along Vava told Ivan Verdroff her story as she had previously related it to Paul.

Suddenly Ivan Verdroff interrupted Vava's story.

"Hark!" he cried, pausing abruptly.

Paul and Vava stopped and were silent.

The sound of voices were heard approaching.

The fugitives hastened to conceal themselves among some detached boulders, and presently Hargardar and his men passed them on their return to the valley camp.

When the police spy and his party were out of sight Ivan Verdroff and his companions pressed on again.

They had gone but a short distance when they again heard voices, and as these sounds seemed to neither draw nearer nor become more distant Ivan left Paul and Vava concealed and advanced alone to reconnoiter.

He presently came upon a party of men who had halted near by.

This was the force of Nicholas Parva.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE END.

Ivan Verdroff advanced near enough to the party of Nicholas Parva to hear the conversation of the police spy and his followers.

A dense growth of larch-trees whose widespreading and interlaced branches were heavily coated with snow concealed the Nihilist.

As yet Nicholas Parva had not discovered the camp of Hargardar.

The mountain patrol who had guided the party since he joined them among the foothills of the Baikals, was somewhat discouraged at the want of success that had thus far attended the expedition.

Nicholas Parva's patience—of which, as we know, he did not possess a superabundance was well-nigh exhausted.

"I will not abandon the quest of this fellow Hargardar until I have searched the mountains from one extremity to the other. I have made up my mind to find him, no matter how much time and trouble the search may require," said Nicholas Parva, in a determined tone.

He was addressing one of the gendarmes.

"True enough," answered the man. "But I have always heard that this Hargardar worshiped gold as a god, and I suppose the temptation offered by Sultan Esa was too strong for him to resist.

"But the czar has taken a deep interest in this case, as witness the notice which I obtained a few hours ago from a mountaineer whom we encountered, and who said it was thrown out before his hut by the postman who carries the royal mail through the mountains."

"Yes," assented Nicholas Parva. "It is, as you say, a case in which the czar has taken a considerable more interest than he usually does to similar affairs, for the governor is a favorite of his. It will be all the worse for Hargardar if he has had a hand in the abduction."

"So I should say. I would not care to stand in his shoes if he is guilty."

"You may well say that," answered Nicholas Parva, and then he called the mountain patrol who had acted as guide.

"Well, when think you we shall reach the mountain-walled valley of which you have been telling us, and which you seem to think might have been selected as a camping-place by the man we seek?" he asked.

"Had we pressed on I think we should have reached the valley by daybreak," answered the patrol.

All this conversation was heard by Ivan Verdroff.

When he heard the gendarme mention the czar's notice, which he said had been flung from the sledge of the royal mail carrier, he, for the first time since he picked it up and crushed it in his pocket, thought of the paper which he had seen the postman throw out upon the mountain plateau as he dashed across it at full speed.

A wild hope dawned in Ivan's heart.

He longed to read the notice which he now assured himself was still in his pocket.

He crept back to the place where he had left Paul and Vava.

In a few words he told them all.

In the darkness it was impossible for Ivan Verdroff to read the notice the postman had thrown from his sledge, and he had no means of producing a light.

But Paul had.

In the tent of the Cossacks where he had been held captive he had found a flint and steel.

Paul hastened to tell his father of his possession.

Then they crept into a sheltered hollow and with his hunting knife Ivan Verdroff split some chips of resinous wood from the trunk of a dead tree that had been blown down in some fierce gale.

After scraping off the icy-frozen exterior of these fragments of wood, by means of the flint and steel, he ignited them.

By the light thus afforded he read the notice of the czar.

It proclaimed that whomsoever should restore Vava Vishkoff to her father, or any authorized agent of his, should receive a large reward in money, and, if an exile, a free pardon for all past offenses.

Ivan Verdroff fell upon his knees.

At last he said:

Heaven has sent our deliverance. We will now take Vava to the agent of her father—the man who has been sent by him to search for her, and whose conversation I have just overheard."

Then the three started forward.

We need not dwell on their reception by Nicholas Parva.

He was delighted to recover the lost daughter of the governor, and he assured Ivan Verdroff that the czar would make good his promise to him who saved Vava.

When from the lips of Vava herself the police spy heard that Hargardar was her abductor, and Ivan and Paul assured him that the valley in which the treacherous spy was encamped was much nearer than the patrol thought, he determined to continue on to it that very night.

This was done.

Meanwhile, the patrol of the mountains had reached Hargardar's camp with their prisoners, the lady Evadna, old Madrack and Michael.

The three captors were standing before Hargardar, who was exulting at their capture, when the party of Nicholas Parva dashed into the valley, accompanied by Ivan Verdroff and Paul.

"Whom have we here?" cried Hargardar, while the Cossacks who surrounded the captives turned their carbines upon Nicholas Parva's band.

"Hargardar, I command you to surrender, in the name of the czar. I have here a warrant for your arrest. I am Nicholas Parva, of Moscow, the deputy of the governor whose daughter you carried off!" cried Parva, as he flourished the warrant of arrest.

Hargardar's men lowered their carbines.

Hargardar turned pale, but he cried:

"This is some ruse of the escaped exiles. At them, my men! Drive these fellows from the valley!"

The Cossacks did not obey.

"Stand aside!" ordered Parva, and as the Cossacks recoiled his men surrounded Hargardar.

Resisting desperately, he was secured.

Ivan Verdroff and his son sprang to the side of the wife and mother.

They were reunited never to be separated again, for the czar kept his promise, and not only rewarded and pardoned Ivan, but Michael also, at the request of the former.

Vava said good-by to Paul a few days later in Timsk, and then she was taken home to her parents by Nicholas Parva.

Hargardar was sentenced to imprisonment in the mines, and Sultan Esa was punished according to law.

Ivan Verdroff and his wife and son returned to St. Petersburg, but not long after their escape from Siberia they emigrated to America.

As for Michael and old Madrack, they still dwell in the Baikal Mountains with Golga, the tame bear, and they are contented and happy.

Next week's issue will contain "THE ABERDEEN ATHLETES; OR, THE BOY CHAMPIONS OF THE CENTURY CLUB." By Howard Austin.

SPECIAL NOTICE. All back numbers of this weekly except the following are in print: 1 to 25, 27, 29 to 36, 38 to 40, 42, 43, 45 to 51, 53 to 55, 57 to 60, 62, 64 to 69, 71 to 73, 75, 79, 81, 84 to 86, 88, 89, 91, 92 to 94, 99, 100, 102, 105, 107, 109 to 111, 116, 119, 124 to 126, 132, 139, 140, 143, 163, 166, 171, 179 to 181, 192, 212, 213, 215, 216, 233, 239, 247, 257, 265, 268, 277, 291. If you cannot obtain the ones you want from any newsdealer, send the price in money or postage stamps by mail to FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 24 UNION SQUARE, New York, and you will receive the copies you order by return mail.



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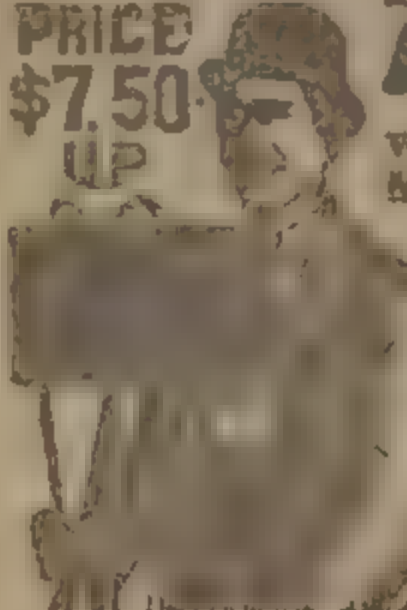
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Pluck and Luck

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BRIEF, BUT POINTED.

In all the highways and byways of Japan, the traveler at certain seasons of the year meets pilgrims making the round of the Buddhist shrines. Clad all in white and carrying only the pilgrim's staff and scrip, they plod their weary way day after day, hospitably entertained and honored by the people, who regard them as holy men. Indeed, they are, in a sense, missionaries; i. e., sent ones, in that they are frequently the representatives of villages or communities of pious people who, unable to make the journey in a body, hope to derive merit from the devotion of their emissaries. The shrines are at the top of the sacred mountains, and the devotions offered by the pilgrims consist in reciting a certain number of set prayers at each holy place. As the places of worship are in widely separated localities, the pilgrimages have done much to unite the different parts of the empire in a sentiment of common nationality. Besides, the pilgrim delegate has profited educationally as well as spiritually. With almond eyes wide open, the shrewd little Jap has ever observed all that is going on about him, and the returned pilgrim brings back with the blessing of the gods a very substantial modicum of agricultural knowledge which he bestows upon his community in return for its support of his pious enterprise.

Salesmen cannot pay too much attention to the fitting of rubbers, for half the life of the rubber is in the proper fit. I believe in fitting rubbers as large as possible. Do not stretch a 4 1-2 rubber over a 5 shoe. It puts too much strain on the rubber and it will break before half worn out. Watch and see that the sole does not project over the edge of the rubber. Do not sell Cuban heel rubbers for low heel shoes and vice versa. We can supply a rubber for almost any heel made to-day. If you do not have rubbers to fit it is your own fault. Do not sell a motorman, teamster or any man or boy who gives a rubber hard use a light rubber. You would not sell a light dress shoe for everyday wear; do not do so with your rubbers. Watch sales more carefully and you will have no trouble with your rubber trade. Watch the heels of the customers' shoes, especially the Cubans. When they get half worn off no rubber will fit or wear over them. Suggest that they get them built up before wearing the rubbers. This causes a large majority of the complaints of rubbers breaking down at the heels, both on men's and ladies' rubbers. Tell your customers not to use their rubbers like a stick of wood after they have worn them a few times, for freezing up on the stoop and thawing out under the hot stove does not help them any.

Last year a cable was laid under the Pacific Ocean from the Fanning Islands, south of Hawaii, to Bamfield Creek on the west coast of Canada. At the same time the construction of a telegraph line across the continent from Bamfield Creek to Montreal was commenced. The work is now completed and Montreal is connected directly with the Fanning Islands by a line 6,800 miles in length, more than half of which is under water. Messages sent by this route from London to Australia and the east coast of Asia gain fifteen minutes in time of transmission over telegrams sent overland across the Eastern continent, owing to the suppression of two relay stations.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

"Is a ton of coal very much, pa?" "It depends on whether you are shoveling it or burning it."

Madge—He stole a kiss from me. Mabel—Well, that was only petit larceny. Madge—It wasn't—it was grand!

"Are you never frightened when you make a flight?" "I had one good scare," replied the businesslike aviator. "Some one told me the money they were putting up for the exhibition was counterfeit."

"Captain, is there no way in which the ship may be saved?" "None at all, sir. We are going to the bottom; but I would not worry about the ship, sir, if I were you; she is fully insured. You'd better find a life belt."

Employment Agent—Why do you leave a place in which you have worked so many years? Domestic—Well, you see, the missus died last month. "The house is lonely now, I suppose?" "Tain't that; but now the missus is dead, the master blames everything on me."

When George Ade was coming from New Orleans last winter he noticed among the race-track men on the train one tan-shoed sheet writer with the largest feet he had ever seen. And he furthermore testifies and affirms that the sheet writer, on rising in the morning, discovered that the porter had shined one shoe and a suit-case.

A little girl was greatly interested in watching the men in her grandfather's orchard putting bands of tar around the fruit trees, and asked a great many questions. Some weeks later, when in the city with her mother, she noticed a gentleman with a mourning band around his left sleeve. "Mamma," she asked, "what's to keep them from crawling up his other arm?"

She was young. This may account for it. Besides that, her companion was well read, so she naturally tried to show her own reading qualities and quantities. "You've read *Dumas*?" he asked. "Oh, yes," she replied. "Ain't he grand?" "And *Hugo*?" "Yes; he's fine!" "Dickens?" "I think he's just glorious!" "How about *Scott*?" "De-licious!" He regarded her keenly for a moment. "Which of his works do you like best, *Ivanhoe* or——" "Oh, *Ivanhoe*, by all means!" she exclaimed, with fervor. He smiled. "Of course," he said, deliberately, "you've read *Scott's 'Emulsion'*?" "Of course," she replied, indignant that he should ask such a question. "But," she added, "I don't think it's as good as *Ivanhoe*." "What he thought of it he didn't say. He simply put the question to the girl on the other side of him, and she tittered.

The Last Shot

By John Sherman.

We had been four days at sea on our voyage to Jamaica, in the year 1814, when the gun-room officers gave our mess a blow-out.

The increased motion and rushing of the vessel through the water, the groaning of the masts, the howling of the rising gale, and the frequent trampling of the watch on deck, were prophetic of wet jackets to some of us.

Still, midshipman-like, we were as happy as a good dinner and some wine could make us, until the old gunner shoved his weather-beaten phiz and bald pate in at the door.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Splinter, but if you will spare Mr. Cringle on the forecastle for an hour until the moon rises."

"Why, Mr. Kennedy, why? Here, man, take a glass of grog."

"I thank you, sir. It is coming on a roughish night, sir. The running ships should be crossing us hereabouts; indeed, more than once I thought there was a strange sail close aboard of us. The scud is flying low and in such white flakes, and none of us have an eye like Mr. Cringle, unless it be John Crow, and he is all but frozen."

"Well, Tom, I suppose you must go."

Having changed my uniform for shag-trousers, pea-jacket, and southwest cap, I went forward and took my station, in no very pleasant humor, on the stowed jib, with my arm round the stay.

I had been half an hour there; the weather was getting worse; the rain was beating in my face, and the spray from the stern was splashing over me as it roared through the waste of sparkling and hissing water.

I turned my back to the weather for a moment to press my hand on my strained eyes.

When I opened them I saw the gunner's gaunt, high-featured visage thrust anxiously forward; his profile looked as though rubbed over with phosphorus, and his whole person as if he had been playing at snap-dragon.

"What has come over you, Mr. Kennedy? Who is burning the blue light now?"

"A wiser man than I am must tell you that. Look forward, Mr. Cringle—look there. What do your books say to that?"

I looked forward, and saw at the extreme end of the jib-boom—what I had read of, certainly, but never expected to see—a pale, greenish, glow-worm-colored flame of the size and shape of the frosted glass shade over the swinging lamp in the gun-room.

It drew out and flattened as the vessel pitched and rose again. At the core it was comparatively bright, but faded into a halo.

It shed a baleful and ominous light on the surrounding objects.

The group of sailors on the forecastle looked like specters, and they shrunk together and whispered when it began to roll slowly along the spar towards where the boatswain was sitting at my feet.

At this instant something slid down the stay, and a cold, clammy hand passed round my neck.

I was within an ace of losing my hold and tumbling overboard.

"Heaven have mercy on me! what's that?"

"It's that skylarking son of a gun, Jem Spark's monkey, sir. You, Jem, you will never rest till that brute is made bait of."

Jackoo vanished up the stay again, chuckling and grinning

in the ghostly radiance as if he had been the "spirit of the Lamp."

The light was still there, but a cloud of mist, like a burst of vapor from a steam-boiler, came down upon the gale and flew past, when it disappeared.

I followed the white mass as it sailed down the wind. It did not, as it appeared to me, vanish in the darkness, but seemed to remain in sight to leeward, as if checked by a sudden flaw; yet none of our sails were taken aback. A thought flashed on me. I peered still more intensely through the mist. I was now certain.

"A sail, broad on the lee bow."

The ship was in a buzz in a moment.

The captain answered from the quarter-deck:

"Thank you, Mr. Cringle. How shall we steer?"

"Keep her away a couple of points, sir. Steady!"

"Steady!" sang the man at the helm.

I turned to the boatswain, who was now beside me:

"Is that you or Davy steering, Mr. Nipper? If you had not been there bodily at my elbow I could have sworn I heard your voice."

When the gunner made the same remark it startled the poor fellow. He tried to take it as a joke, but he could not.

"There may be a laced hammock with a shot for some of us before morning."

At this moment, to my dismay, the object we were chasing shortened, gradually fell abeam of us, and disappeared.

"The Flying Dutchman!"

"I can't see her at all now."

"She will be a fore-and-aft rigged vessel."

Sure enough, after a few seconds, I saw it again.

"The chase has tacked, sir; put the helm to, or she will go to windward of us."

We tacked also, and time it was we did so, for the rising moon now showed us a large schooner, rigged up with a crowd of sail.

We bore down on her, when, finding her maneuver detected, she trailed up her flat sails, and bore up before the wind.

This was our best point of sailing, and we cracked on, the captain rubbing his hands.

"It's my turn to be the big 'un this time."

Although blowing a strong northwester, it was now clear moonlight, and we hammered away from our bow-guns; but whenever a shot told amongst the rigging the injury was repaired as if by magic.

It was evident we had repeatedly hulled her from the glimmering white streaks along her counter and along her stern, and occasionally by the splintering of the timber, but it seemed to produce no effect.

At length we drew well up on her quarter.

She continued all black hull and white sail; not a soul to be seen on the deck except a dark object, which we took for the man at the helm.

"What schooner's, that?"

No answer.

"Heave to, or I'll sink you."

Still all silent.

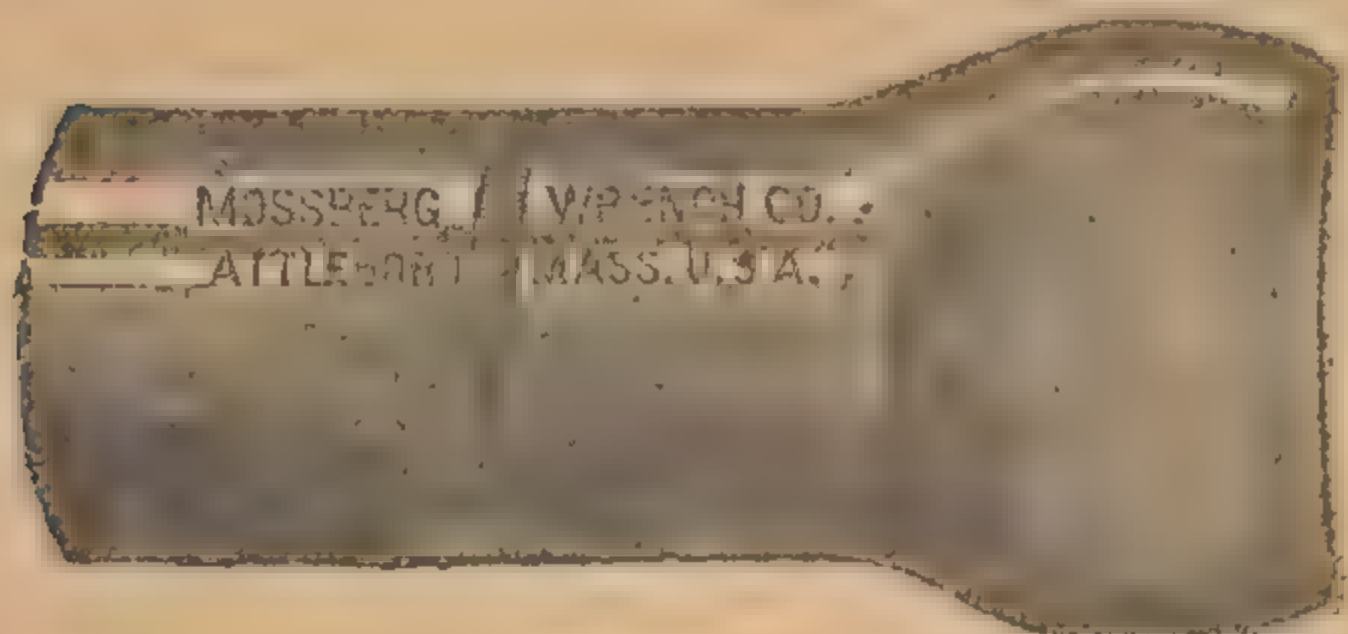
"Sergeant Armstrong, do you think you could pick off that chap at the wheel?"

The marine jumped on the forecastle and leveled his piece, when a musket-shot from the schooner crashed through his skull and he fell dead.

"Forecastle there, Mr. Nipper, clap a canister of grape over the round-shot into the boat gun and give it to him."

"Aye, aye, sir!" gleefully rejoined the boatswain, forgetting the augury and everything else in the excitement of the moment.

(Continued on page 32.)



DEVILINE'S WHISTLE.—Nickel plated, polished; it produces a near-piercing sound; large seller; illustration actual size.

Price, 12c., by mail.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



BLACK-EYE JOKE.

—New and amusing joke. The victim is told to hold the tube close to his eye so as to exclude all light from the back, and then to revolve the tube until pictures appear in the center. In trying to locate the pictures he will receive the finest black-eye you ever saw. We furnish a small box of blackening preparation with each tube, so the joke can be used indefinitely. Those not in the trick will be caught every time. Absolutely harmless. Price by mail, 15c. each, 2 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



FINGER MOUSE.—We need hardly tell you about this great novelty. It has proven one of the greatest sellers ever put on the market. The men on the street have sold nearly a million and every day the demand for them is growing. The head is like a mouse in every respect. The "body" is also like a mouse but is hollow, allowing the index finger to slip into it. While you are sitting at the dinner table—one of your friends who is "in on the trick" says she just saw a mouse and a moment or two after, the head of the mouse is seen to creep up over the edge of the table. Can you imagine the surprise and consternation? There are a thousand other stunts you can play with this mouse, such as slipping it out of your sleeve, your pockets, etc. This trick is very popular with the ladies. Price by mail, 10c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



THE FINGER THROUGH THE HAT.—Having borrowed a hat from your friend, push your finger through the crown of it, and it is seen to move about. Though very amusing to others, the owner of the hat does not see the joke, but thinks it meanness to destroy his hat, yet when it is returned it is perfectly uninjured. Price by mail, 10c. each.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



CACHOO OR SNEEZING POWDER.—The greatest fun-maker of them all. A small amount of this powder, when blown in a room, will cause everyone to sneeze without anyone knowing where it comes from. It is very light, will float in the air for some time, and penetrate every nook and corner of a room. It is perfectly harmless. Cachoo is put up in bottles, and one bottle contains enough to be used from 10 to 15 times.

Price by mail, 10c. each; 3 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



NEW SURPRISE NOVELTY.—Foxy Grandpa, Mr. Pee-wee and other comical faces artistically colored, to which is attached a long rubber tube, connected with a rubber ball, which can be filled with water, the rubber ball being carried in the pocket, a slight pressure on the bulb causes a long stream, the result can easily be seen; a good amusing seller.

Price, 12c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



MATRIMONIAL KNOT.—Made of colored braided straw tube; open at both ends. Insert fingers at each end as far as they go, and then try and pull them out, and then you will find you are caught for good.

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WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



SPIRAL SPRING PUZZLE.—Made of strong double spiral wire, fastened at ends. Take hold of puzzle at ends and turn it, trying to separate the wires; you can see them moving, but they never separate. Why? Packed one gross in a box, with full directions slip.

Price, 8c., postpaid.

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The Magic Nail.—A common nail is given for examination, and then instantly shown pierced through the finger; and yet, when taken out, the finger is found to be perfectly uninjured, and the nail is again given to be examined. Nicely finished.

Price, 10c

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THE FOUNTAIN RING.

—A handsome ring connected with a rubber ball which is concealed in the palm of the hand. A gentle squeeze forces water or cologne in the face of the victim while he is examining it. The ball can be instantly filled by immersing ring in water same as a fountain pen filler. Price by mail, postpaid, 12c. each.

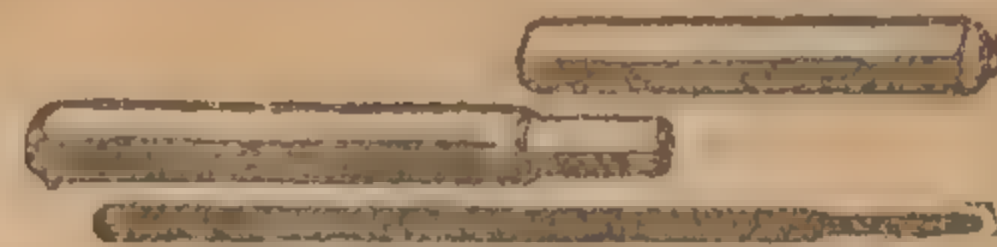
FRANK ROBINSON, 311 WEST 44TH ST., N. Y.



The Bottle Imp.—The peculiarity of this little bottle is that it cannot be made to lie down, and yet by simply passing the hand over it, the performer causes it to do so. This trick affords great amusement, and is of convenient size to carry about.

Price, 10c

CHAS. UNGER, 316 UNION ST., JERSEY CITY, N. J.



GLASS PEN.—Patent glass pen, with nice dip, writes like any ordinary pen; each put up in wooden box. Price, 10c., postpaid.

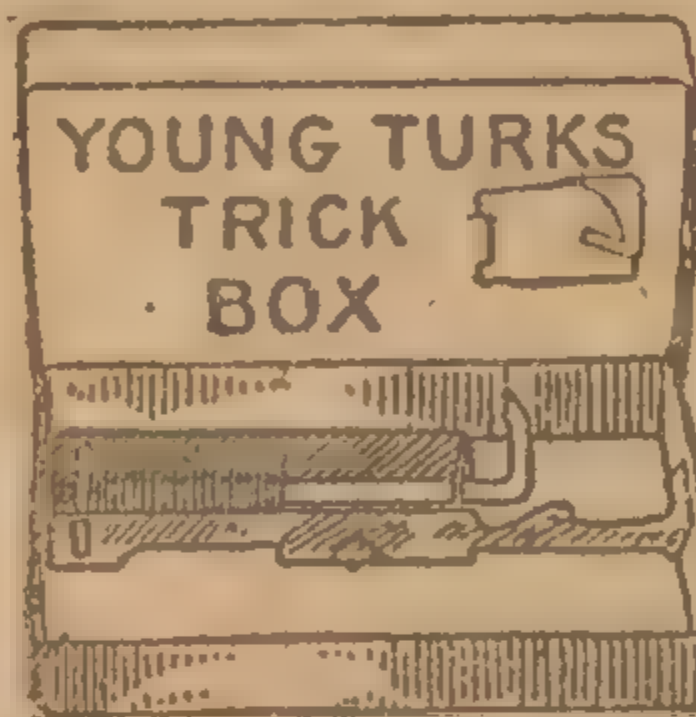
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



TRICK CUP.—Made of natural white wood turned with two compartments; a round black ball fits on those compartments; the other is a stationary ball. By a little practice you make the black ball vanish; a great trick novelty and immense seller.

Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



TRICK CIGARETTE BOX.—The box is made in exact shape and size as any of the brands of Turkish cigarettes, but in the box is a mechanism by means of which a percussion cap, previously put in place, explodes by opening the box. The box is opened to give a friend a cigarette upon request of same. A great amusing novelty and good seller.

Price, 18c., postpaid.

Chas. Unger, 316 Union St., Jersey City, N. J.



GREAT PANEL TRICK.—This remarkable illusion consists of a simple, plain wooden panel, octagonal in shape, with no signs of a trick about it. The panel can be examined by any one; you then ask for a penny or silver coin and place it on the center of the panel; then at the word of command the coin immediately disappears. You do not change the position of the panel at any time, but hold it in full view of the audience all the time. The coin does not pass into the performer's hand, nor into his sleeve; neither does it drop upon the floor. The second illusion is as wonderful as the first; at the word of command the coin again appears upon the center of the panel as mysteriously as it went. We send full printed instructions by the aid of which any one can perform the trick, to the astonishment and delight of their friends. Price, 15c., 2 for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



AUTOMATIC COPYING PENCIL.—The importance of carrying a good reliable pencil need not be dwelt upon here. It is an absolute necessity with us all. The holder of this pencil is beautifully nicked, with grooved box-wood handle, giving a firm grip in writing; the pencil automatically supplies the lead as needed while a box of these long leads are given with each pencil. The writing of this pencil is indelible the same as ink, and thus can be used in writing letters, addressing envelopes, etc. Bills of account or invoices made out with this pencil can be copied the same as if copying ink was used. It is the handiest pencil on the market; you do not require a knife to keep it sharp; it is ever ready, ever safe, and just the thing to carry in your vest pocket. Price of pencil with box of leads complete, only 10c., 3 for 25c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

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they will be unable to open it. Price by mail, postpaid, 25c. each.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



placed on the finger with the coin showing on the palm of the hand and offered in change it cannot be picked up. A nice way to tip people. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c. each.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



CHANGING MONEY TRICK BOX.—With this trick box you can make money change from a penny into a dime or vice-versa. Also make dimes appear and disappear at your command. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c. each.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.

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VANISHING CIGAR.—This cigar is made an exact imitation of a good one. It is held by a rubber cord, which with the attached safety pin, is fastened on the inside of the sleeve. When offered to a friend, as it is about to be taken, it will instantly disappear. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c. each.

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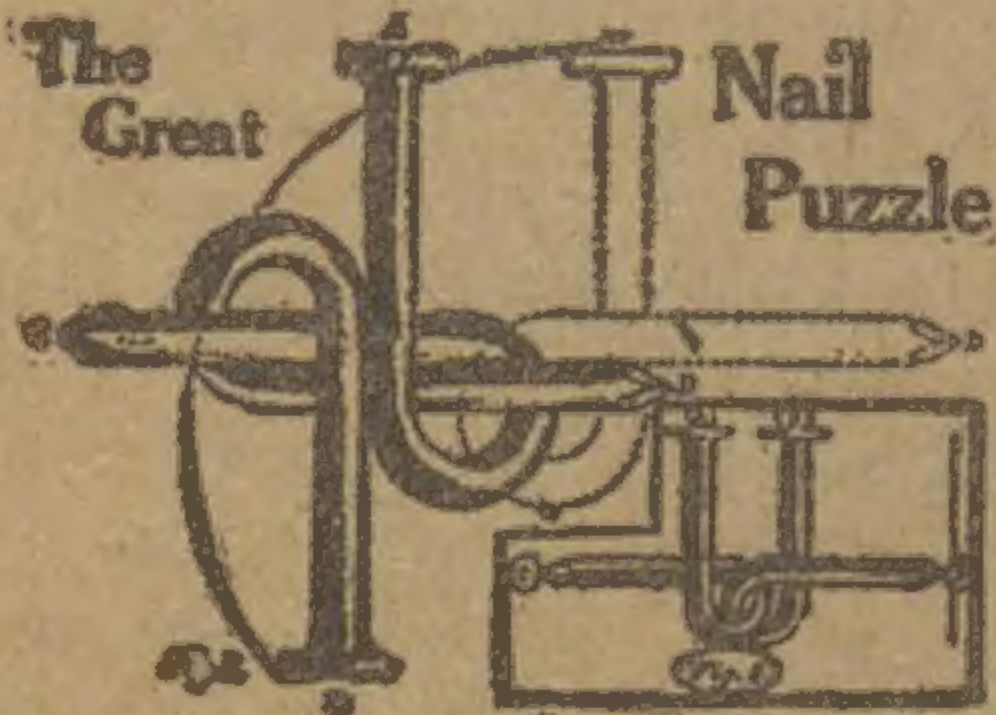
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NAIL PUZZLE.—Made of two metal nails linked together. Keep folks guessing; easy to take them apart when you know how. Directions with every one. Price, 6c., postpaid.

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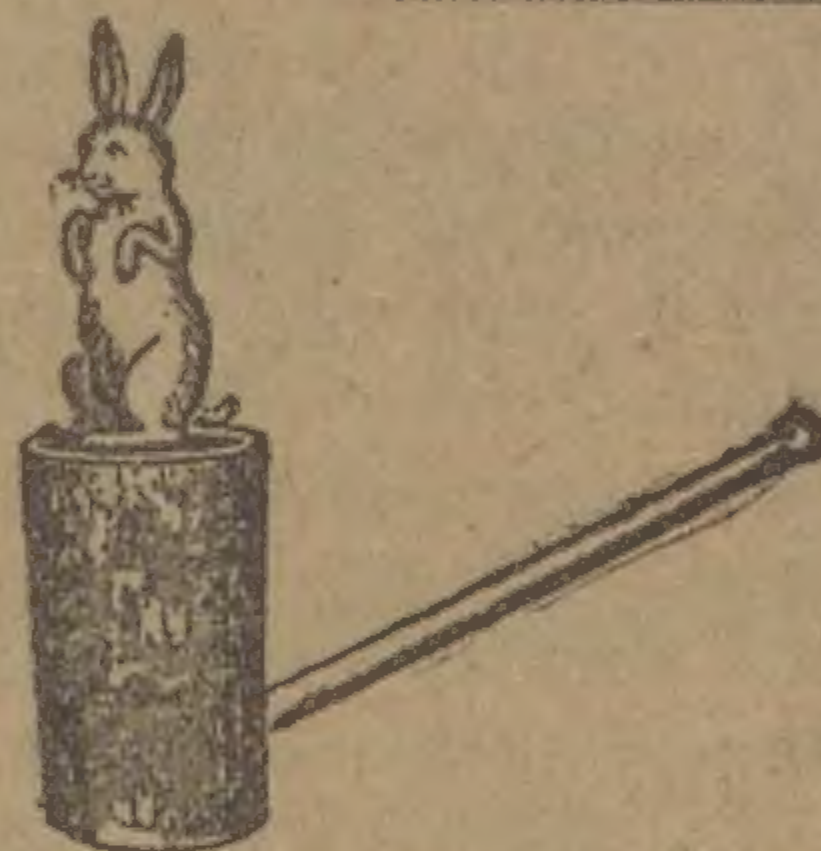
JAPANESE TRICK KNIFE.—You can show the knife and instantly draw it across your finger, apparently cutting deep into the flesh. The red blood appears on the blade of the knife, giving a startling effect to the spectators. The knife is removed and the finger is found in good condition. Quite an effective illusion. Price by mail, 10c. each.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



throw the discs to the floor. Every pane of glass in the house will at once seem to have been shattered. Price by mail, postpaid, 35c. a set of six plates.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



MAGIC PIPE.—Made with a regular corn-cob pipe, with rubber figures inside; by blowing through the stem the figure will jump out. Made in following figures: rabbits, donkeys, cats, chickens, etc.; packed one dozen assorted figures to a box. Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

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This is an entirely new harmonica, made in Dresden, Germany. It is a large instrument with 16 double holes, silver reeds, 18 bugle outlets, ornamented nicked facings, and includes in its make-up all the latest improvements in high price instruments. Its tone is heavy, rich and sonorous in expression, but the polished player can produce soft, clear, sweet tones that will delight all who hear him. Each instrument in a strong case.

Price, 35 cents; postpaid.
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SPIRIT SLATE-WRITING.—No trick has ever puzzled the scientists more and created a greater sensation than the famous spirit-writings which appear between sealed slates which have freely been shown cleaned, carefully tied together and given to a spectator to hold. These spirits answer questions. Sold by us complete, slates and secret. No chemical used.

Price, 75c.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 41 W. 26th St., N. Y.

(Continued from page 29)

In a twinkling the square foresail, top-gallant, royal, and studding-sail halyards were let go by the run on board of the schooner as if they had been shot away, and he put his helm hard aport as if to round to.

"Rake him, sir, or give him the stern. He has not surrendered. I know their game. Give him your broadside, sir, or he is off to windward of you like a shot. No, no; we have him now. Heave to, Mr. Splinter, heave to!"

We did so, and that so suddenly that the studding-sail booms snapped like pipe-shanks short off by the irons.

Notwithstanding we had shot two hundred yards to the leeward, before we could lay our maintop-sail to the mast, I ran to windward.

The schooner's yard and rigging were now black with men, clustered like bees swarming. Her square sails were being closely furled, her fore and aft sails set, and away she was, dead to windward of us.

We made all sail in chase, blazing away to little purpose; we had no chance on a bowline, and when our opponent had satisfied himself of his superiority by one or two short tacks, he deliberately took a reef in his mainsail, hauled down his flying-jib and gaff topsail, triced up the bunt of his foresail, and fired his long thirty-two at us.

The shot came in at the third aftermost port on the starboard side, and dismounted the carronade, smashing the side, and wounding three men.

As the brig fell off our long gun was run out to have a parting crack at her, when the third and last shot from the schooner struck the sill of the midship port, and made the white splinters fly from the solid oak like bright silver sparks in the moonlight.

A sharp, piercing cry arose into the air, my soul identified that death-shriek with the voice that I had heard, I saw the man who was standing with the lanyard of the lock in his hand drop heavily across the breech, and discharge the gun in his fall.

Thereupon the blood-red glare shot up into the cold blue sky, as if a volcano had burst forth from beneath the mighty deep, followed by a roar and a shattering crash, and a mingling of unearthly cries and groans, and a concussion of the air, and of the waters, as if our whole broadside had been fired at once.

Then a solitary splash here, and a dip there, and short, sharp yells, and low choking, bubbling moans, as the hissing fragments of the noble vessel we had seen fell into the sea, and the last of her gallant crew vanished forever beneath that pale, dread moon.

We were alone, and once more all was dark, and wild, and stormy.

Fearfully had that ball sped, fired by a dead man's hand.

But what is it that clings black and doubled across that fatal cannon, dripping and heavy, and choking the scuppers with clotted blood, and swaying to and fro with the motion of the vessel, like a bloody fleece?

"Who was hit at the gun there?"

"Mr. Nipper, the boatswain, sir. The last shot has cut him in two."

Sierra County's Lost Mines

Have you ever heard of the Rheingold? That mysterious treasure at the bottom of the River Rhine which no man has found since the Knight Hagen von Tronje dropped it overboard.

And no one has ever found it, nor has modern science been able to explain whence comes the gold that is still found in

small quantities in the sands of the mighty river. Undoubtedly in olden days the gold was found in larger nuggets, and those finds were responsible for the myth of the lost treasure that was buried by the valiant if mythical Knight Hagen, who took it from the murdered Siegfried, who in turn got it through his conquest of the Nibelungen, the Niflingen, the mythical little people of the mountains that garnered it from the bowels of the earth. And so in this old Teutonic saga we find all the incidents that go to make up in these days the stories of lost treasure and lost mines.

Just how much gold still lies buried there no man knows, because only the surface dirt has been washed, while the alluvial deposit is over 200 feet in thickness, and gold has been found all the way to the Rio Grande, toward which the mesa slopes away for twenty miles.

The quartz reefs in the Percha Hills have produced over \$9,000,000 and only the surface has been scratched. In these quartz reefs chunks of gold weighing ten pounds have been found, and in the old days many a high-grader got away with a snug fortune pilfered from the drifts.

Many of the old timers hold to the opinion that the old Spanish mine exists at the same place where the famous Adams diggings are supposed to be. These Adams diggings are by no means mythical, because both their discovery and their subsequent loss happened within the last fifty years. Adams, one of the discoverers, died only a few years ago, and many men are still living who knew him well and who accompanied him on one or the other of his expeditions.

Adams was one of a party of fifteen who left California in 1860 to prospect for a rich placer deposit, which was supposed to exist somewhere in the mountains at the head of the Gila. The party proceeded to Fort Yuma, where they outfitted. Among the Yuma Indians they inquired about the gold fields, but could get no information until a prisoner of the tribe, who turned out to be a Mexican, told them he could lead them to the place.

They purchased this prisoner, and under his guidance the party traveled up the valley of the Gila for several hundred miles until they came into a mountainous region, where, the guide said, the river had its headwaters. After several days further travel they reached the place they were looking for. Three mountain peaks rose from the valley at this point, and between two of them a stream flowed eastward. At the base of the central mountain lay the placer field. The party went into camp and kept hard at work until the supplies began to get low, when it was decided that half the company should return to Yuma with the gold already recovered and should bring back supplies for those that remained.

It was thought that the return trip should be completed within a month, but when the allotted time went by and there was no sign of the expedition those that had remained decided that three of them should set out for relief and the rest should stay in possession of the field.

Accordingly, the remaining provisions were subdivided and Adams was chosen as one of the relief expedition. He and his companions started one morning before daybreak. When they reached the top of the mesa which they had to mount they looked back at the camp, and to their horror discovered their hut in flames, while naked savages were dancing around a stake, at which one of their comrades was being tortured.

The three men fled in terror. They traveled a while in company, but lack of water drove reason from them, and only two ever reached human habitation. One of these was Adams. His companion succumbed to the hardships, but Adams recovered, under the careful treatment of an army surgeon who was with a troop of cavalry that was at the time exploring the headwaters of the Gila and into whose camp Adams had wandered.

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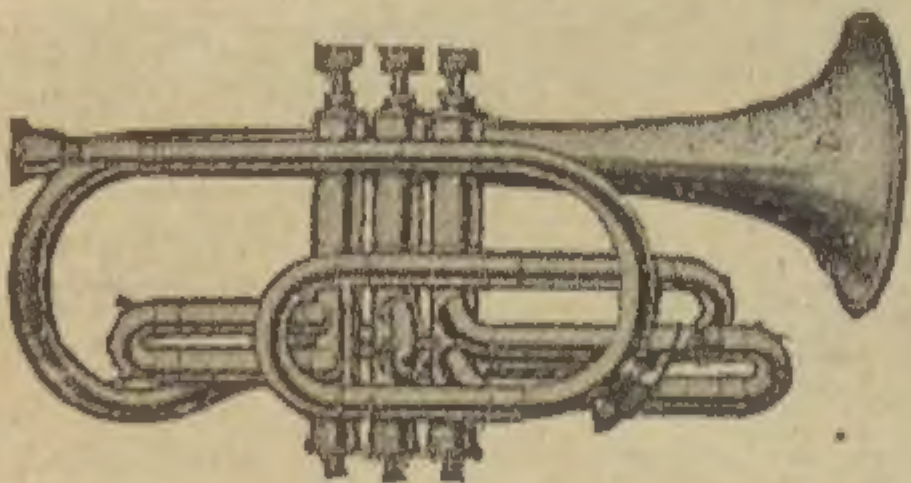
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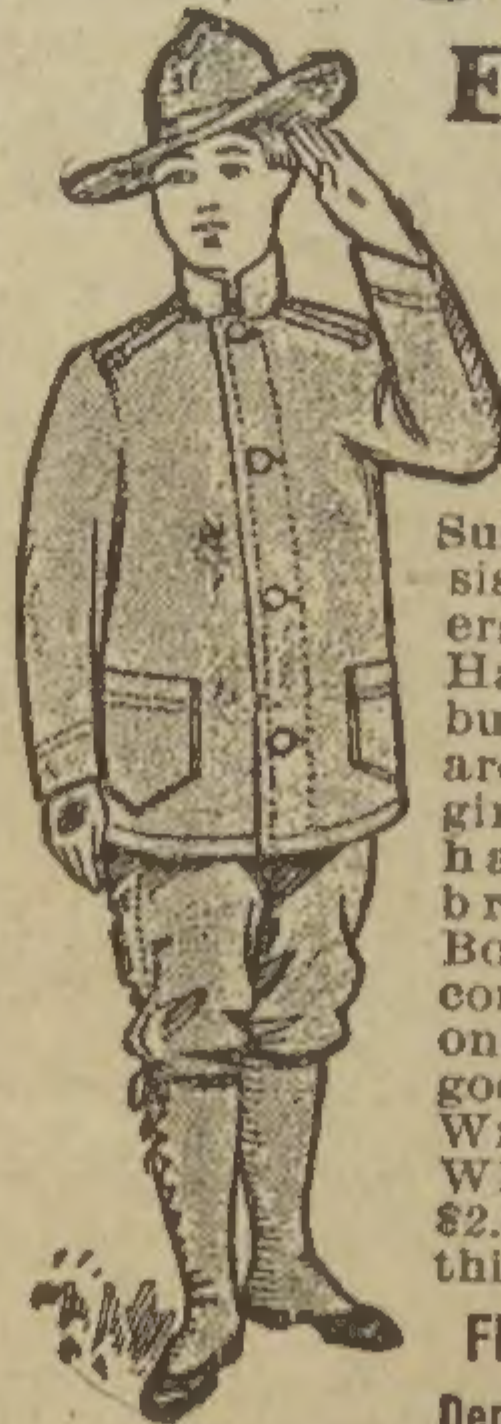
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